THE BOOK OF BALLY-NOGGIN

L. C. ALEXANDER

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The Book of Ballynoggin

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By

L. C. Alexander



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The Elder

Chapter I

FATHER O'KAY of Baleila was on his way to Ballynoggin to consult Lawyer Kennada.

A strange thing had just happened, and Father O'Kay's manner was more than usually abstracted though there was an expression of excitement in his eyes and a glow on each cheekbone.

His old one-eyed cob was quite aware of his master's state of mind and so took matters leisurely. He began with a satisfying brush of his forehead against the tufts of fern on a mossy dyke; after which he made arabesques along the road, for the grasses, dandelions and great sorrels grew on either side; and, as every horse knows, casual snatches of such dusty salad are sweeter far than the formal abundance of mere stable corn or authorised pasture in dewy meads.

The road went up and down, winding between the vandyked sandy little beaches—where the offshoot of the great bay outside cut into the land and lay like a shining tentacle—on one side, and the jagged limestone rocks on the other side, with some fisherfolks' cottages and a few comfortable houses here and there, picturesquely disposed; and, where it turned more inland, sheltered hollows where great trees hung across it.

The cob knew the most pleasant spots. In one of them he dreamt and cogitated at considerable length, un-

disturbed. Then, hearing a slight rustle behind him, and sensible that the lax rein had fallen altogether on his neck, he turned his practicable eye round, and seeing his master unfold a letter, he hung his head and dozed off in a business-like way on three feet and the tip of a fourth.

Father O'Kay read out, for the tenth time, at the least—

"On the 11th July 18—"

"That's ten years ago," he commented. Then he exclaimed in surprise—"Why, this is the 11th July! I didn't notice it before. That is a very singular thing—a very singular thing."

He resumed the reading:

"Mr J. W. Pitt with his wife, his young son—his living daughter was in a school in England—two grandchildren, who were double orphans, and two negro servants, man and wife, sailed from Calpalca, on the Magdalena River, on board a brig which he had bought cheap. It had been captured and condemned for trying to run arms and contraband stores in the last, or last but one, revolution. He was sick of the state of the country, and he had got a hint that the other side meant to do him harm if it succeeded next time. He was known to be a personal friend of the actual president, and he was suspected of sending him arms and money in the last up-set.

"There is always another side out here; and when it gets the upper hand another side comes to a head and tries to turn it out, and there is fighting and flying, and a great deal more public and private revenge and plunder than the world ever hears of.

"So, Mr Pitt sold up—houses, stores, lands, machinery, cattle, and everything else. There was nothing else for it: he wanted to get away smartly while he had the chance.

"He had to face some loss, but that was a small matter. He went round the bigger merchants and planters and bought bills on London, Liverpool, Hamburg, and other places. He was a good man of business and did a fine stroke in taking several hundred tons of cargo at top rates—coffee, rubber, bark, dyewoods, tobacco, and such like.

"He intended to make Nassau or other safe port, tranship to steamer, and sell the brig.

"He got together a scratch crew—Spanish, Dutch and American—eight or nine—as all the original crew were in prison. He picked up a smart fellow, a Scotchman, I believe, as captain, named David Neaves. I remember his name for I had it on my bill of lading. He had been imprisoned, too, but he wriggled or bribed himself out, pretending that he had been only a passenger picked up from a wreck. But I have no doubt that he was the real captain and, perhaps, also owner or part owner, with some underling as nominal captain. Anyway, he satisfied Mr Pitt, who was no fool.

"I took £2000 of his money—or local acceptances as good as money—for which I gave him bills on my Liverpool agents.

"He took with him, loose, some thirty or forty thousand pesetas, a good deal of jewellery (his wife and the dead married daughter had a lot), the drafts on Europe, and a quantity of bonds, title deeds, and so forth.

"These he stowed in a small but very strong safe which I sold him. I did it because he wanted it badly, and we had been friends and neighbours so long, and we might never see each other again.

"It was an old-fashioned safe, with a little arrangement for setting the lock so that nobody could open it, even

with the proper key, unless he had the password to which it happened to be set.

"From that day forth to this I have not seen or heard anything about him—except a crazy sort of story of his old nigger who was landed at Carthagena, some months later, and protested a long rigmarole about their being all murdered on board, and his swimming to an island, and being afterwards rescued.

"He was brought in by a British steamer, and it was true enough that he had been taken off a little island in the Florida Reef; but nobody could make head or tail of his story, and nobody believed a word of it—or seemed to. He was almost a skeleton and his wool had turned quite white. They clapped him in jail, where he died raving mad some weeks after.

"I have never heard a word more, though I made lots of enquiries.

"My agents write me regularly that my draft, of which I duly advised them, has never been presented for acceptance. The money has been lying to my credit all the time, and the usual commercial five per cent interest has been accruing on it, making about a thousand pounds additional.

"I did not know anyone belonging to him, nor the name of the school where the girl was; and I had no proper evidence of his death; and I came to consider that I had a right to do what banks do with unclaimed balances—keep the money.

"But the thing has troubled my conscience of late. I have had a touch or two of illness——"

"Ha!" remarked Father O'Kay at this point. "Conscience! Been ill! H'm!"

Then he gently woke his cob from a deep sleep to turn him round so that he might take a pinch of snuff in spite

of the wind ; and forgot to turn him back again. Whereupon the cob took up his slumber where he had left off, and his master, as he imagined himself to be, resumed the letter:

"I have been trying to remember about his daughter's school in England, but in vain. I do not know whether she is even alive now.

"If she is alive I do not want to keep the money from her. I will not have it on my soul, whether she is alive or dead.

"I send you my draft for the full sum, with a hundred pounds the more, and I have cancelled my former advices.

"If you think fit, and necessary, to try and find the girl —she must be a woman by this time—or any other blood relations, let it be as you prefer, and under a lawyer's opinion that it is all right: and keep you, Reverend Sir, the £100 for your chapel or your poor.

"If no rightful claimant comes forward, or if you think it no business of our's to seek them ; or if your lawyer, and, above all, yourself, is not satisfied about it, or about the persons coming forward—if you consider it needful to seek them—then I make you free of the whole of the money with my full heart and soul.

"But don't let it go from Baleila. Use all the odd money as you please: it is your's: but let £3000 be funded so that the parish priest shall always have the interest of it to do what he likes with, and the fund to last for ever.

"And I should like, when I am dead, for a Mass to be said once a year for my soul.

"Larry tells me how good you have been to him ; and my brother Peter would give his life-blood to save your Reverence a minute's ache. I thank you for your kindness to my boy, my one child in the world ; and may it please

God to let me live long enough to come across and see you and Peter and the old place and the dear country before I die!

"*P.S.*—If you do pay the big money away, keep the hundred pounds anyway, for it has nothing at all to do with the other."

Father O'Kay replaced the letter in his breast pocket.

"Again that vile thought!" cried he, throwing up his head with an angry gesture. "Retro Satanas!" he almost shouted.

Then his face softened as he lowered it and murmured to himself:

"And yet—and yet I found myself calculating more on the use of the money here than on finding the rightful heirs to it: more on the benefit than on the righteousness. Mea culpa, mea culpa!"

He smote his breast, then he clasped his hands and bent his head in silent prayer.

These proceedings, from the snuff-box incident, had been watched with grim curiosity and contempt by Mr Andrew Beith who was slowly walking up the road.

Due salutations were followed by the latter's turning round the cob, on learning the Priest's destination, and they went along together at walking pace.

Full of the subject which preoccupied him, Father O'Kay asked Mr Beith whether he had ever known or heard of cases where ships were lost at sea without anything ever turning up to denote their fate—except their total disappearance.

Mr Beith gave him a long, calm, searching look as if to read in the old man's mind some indication of a corroding remorse for ships cast away in lonely seas; or some sign of a deadly secret confided to him; or some misgiving as to a crime in contemplation.

Father O'Kay seemed to guess his thought, for he laughed as he said, as if answering the unspoken questionings:

"No, no. I'm not going to turn pirate or even marine Fenian. I ask for a reason which concerns others. God be with the souls that are gone, and help those that are left!"

Mr Beith smiled slightly—an unusual relaxation, if not almost a relapse, for him—as he replied:

"Aye, Mr O'Kay, many and many. And such things happen daily and nightly, and never a sign nor a chip nor a rag to tell the story, and nobody ever the wiser. The mysterious visitation of the Lord who comes as a thief in the night; or the carelessness of officers; or the selfishness of owners; or the bad hearts of men, which are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—until they have repentance given to them—grace to cry for grace and faith to pray for faith."

There was something fierce in the intensity of the man. His rugged unashamed earnestness, and his almost proud self-abasement had an element of grandeur. A vague impression that there was a touch of insanity in the Elder's contrition darted transiently through the Priest's mind; but it lost itself, as it were, at the instant of birth, in the thought that Mr Beith, were he but a Catholic, might have been a splendid ascetic, a devoted monk, a fearless missionary, a passionless inquisitor. What a pity, sighed he, that all this pent-up force should be thrown away on a mere Presbyterian, torturing himself with the deceptions of his ruthless beliefs, assertive individuality, and metaphysical glooms! He felt himself feeble and commonplace in comparison, until he balanced it with the reminder that, after all, Mr Beith was a lost, though a strong, soul.

The while, the Elder reflected on the sadness of the

fact that Father O'Kay was a Papist, a tolerator of shrines and visible presentments, a servitor of the Scarlet Lady, a mere teller in a foreign Bank of Faith on which its dupes draw their pitiable little cheques of hope which are honoured by worthless paper tokens. He admitted that, in a merely self-deluded moral way—that trap and pitfall for the unregenerated—the Priest was a singularly good man, whom he liked and esteemed, though he detested his doctrines and had no doubts whatever as to his future destiny.

Thus going along they talked of various local matters in a quiet way. That is to say, the Priest mostly talked and the Elder mostly scowled. But the former knew that, in spite of his hard and cold manner, the latter was by no means unsympathetic or uncharitable. Why, he checked off to himself, there were those new sails and nets which he bought for the wrecked fishermen; and didn't he, without a word, help those emigrants when they were so sorely distressed at the threatened separation and breaking up of two families? And what did he do about young Dempsey but buy him out of the Army because his old mother was fretting about the rapscallion, and his sweetheart was breaking her heart for him; and give him the cash to marry on and find him work, besides? And didn't he send money last winter for his — Father O'Kay's — poor, and six bottles of good red port wine for his own drinking at Christmas time?

He could prolong the list, and he felt that he could pardon his companion's impregnable taciturnity: he even hoped that, in some occult way, those inveteracies of piety, uncompromising tenets, sour disconsolations and unepiscopal blunderings might mercifully work out as a kind of unconscious penance.

If, he observed to himself, it was difficult to like him, it was impossible to refrain from respecting him.

He rapidly ran over in his mind some of the theories that were circulated about him—all frankly imaginary—such as, that he had lost his wife; that he had been crossed in love when young; that he had been cursed by his father; that he had cast off his only daughter who had married against his will; that he had lost a great fortune through the treachery of a friend; that his life had become embittered by the perfidy of a woman; or—but this seemed too extravagantly improbable—that he had been wild in his youth and had, in an unguarded moment, happened across a revivalist; and other speculations of an ingenious character, too probable to be true.

But one circumstance, which was not at all theoretic, furnished some clue as to his past. It was when a big ship in the bay drifted from her moorings—in the absence of the captain, who was drunk ashore, and during a fight between the drunken crew and the riggers and carpenters on board—and threatened wreck and disaster. Mr Beith, in his shining broadcloth, jumped into a boat, sculled rapidly alongside, swung himself on board like a cat, notwithstanding his fifty odd years and a certain corpulency which had settled on his tall broad-built body, and took command. How like a trumpet his voice rang out; how every man recognised his power and obeyed orders, which, with maritime curses strange and loud, startled them into action, and astonished the hearers on land; how, like magic, everything was saved and put shipshape! Also, how, on landing again, he was met by the captain who began to hector, whereupon Elder Beith, with a deep-sea imprecation, threw him neck and crop into five feet of water, and then went

quietly and almost shamefacedly home, where he remained for over a week, doubtless lamenting his backsliding—and considerably refreshed thereby.

Nor was this the only evidence that he was an intrepid sailor and dearly loved the sea. His house was near the shore, just below Mr M'Phail's which was well back on the hillside, and he had a little six-ton yacht which, as often as not, he sailed single-handed, and in which he cruised about and lived for days at a time. When not alone, he only took old Dempsey who, with his wife, were his servants, living in a but-and-ben cottage at the end of what he called his garden, in which grew only kail and chickweed. His only other occupations were reading—the Bible and religious books alone—and the work connected with his church—for he was one of Dr M'Donner's most active Elders, although he had only lived two years in the neighbourhood. It was the reading of an eloquent sermon of Dr M'Donner's which had brought Mr Beith to "sit under" that preacher, and to settle in the locality. He had, at his own expense, reprinted that sermon and sent it, by post, far and wide; even offering a copy to Father O'Kay who, whilst smilingly declining it, mourned in mind at the mistaken zeal of those heretics, as he beamingly regarded the bright new frock of a gilt and renovated Madonna—at which Mr Beith frowningly bemoaned the darkened soul that noticed such abominations, and quoted a number of apposite texts on the subject—mostly minatory.

Father O'Kay dismounted to visit some cottages before getting to Ballynoggin. Perhaps, with the fine tact of an Irishman, he wished to spare the Elder the possible mortification or incongruity of being seen in company with a priest. Mr Beith pursued the remainder of the road alone.

Father O'Kay stood and looked after him, he did not well know why, as he walked away at an increased pace. It was partly curiosity, partly admiration, and partly a vague wistfulness which he did not hasten to account for. He watched the sturdy stride, the powerful set-up shoulders, the straight figure, the gallant poise of head, the swinging of the great long arms, through the ladder-like bars of light and shade thrown by the trees overhead which leant across the road, until his size went down with the distance, and a descent completely hid him from view.

"Yes," said the Priest to himself, as he aroused the cob from his reverie, "there's power—power in every fibre of him—body and mind and soul. Pity that some reason of his own—maybe, a heartache that only One other knows of—has led him to hang up his life in this quiet spot—at his age and with his great capacity and strength!"

Chapter II

Mr Kennada advertised in over a dozen leading papers in the three Kingdoms and was astonished at the number of persons who desired to learn something to their advantage. He received "sheaves and stacks" of letters, as he expressed it—most of the writers claiming kinship on the strength of mere similarity of name; telegrams asking, instead of giving, particulars; instructions to remit forthwith; offers to share with him; circulars from agencies which profess exclusive knowledge of unclaimed millions; and not a few visitors from far and near.

Amongst the latter were a young surgeon named Milner, and his wife. Unlike all the rest, they seemed chiefly anxious for information as to Mr Pitt and his family, and

it was evident that they clung to a half hope that some, at least, might still be alive—in spite of the negro's story —which they knew all about, though no hint of it had escaped the lawyer or the Priest. Whereat they had looked at each other significantly. They had tried to persuade themselves of many possibilities, they explained :— perhaps, Mr Pitt and his family had been imprisoned or interned during the political convulsions of the country, and had only now returned—though it was strange that it should be a solicitor in a distant Western Irish town who was employed to trace the relatives.

Dr Milner had never implicitly believed the negro's story; he sometimes thought that, if true in part, Mr Pitt's ship had been captured by a government or rebel craft, and that the ghastly tale was the exaggeration of a terrified and unhinged mind. That such means, however, as advertisements should be necessary was not surprising, seeing that Mrs Milner had left her school a good many years ago, when, on rumours of the disappearance, the bank ceased to pay, and her own and the principal's letters evoked no reply from South America; and that she had then been adopted into the household of Dr Milner's mother, whence they had married.

They admitted that she had thus probably conduced to being lost sight of; and they wondered if previous efforts to find her had passed unnoticed.

There was no mistaking the genuineness of their disappointment and grief when those slender threads of hope were at last cut away. Dr Milner briefly narrated that about the middle of August 18— he was surgeon on board the S.S. *Margloss*—having just obtained his degree in surgery. They had had very bad weather after leaving Puerto Rico, the boat was cranky and the crew sulky, for they had on board a Catholic bishop and a number

of priests and monks who were on their way from Europe to some places in Colombia and Bolivia. Everybody knows how superstitious sailors are on the subject of clergymen on board ship. The steamer, with a partial breakdown in the machinery, brought up in a little sheltered bay formed by an islet at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico—one of the numerous spots forming the Florida Reefs. Here the infirm old prelate died, and the crew—worn-out and discontented—made it very clear that they did not want the corpse to be carried in the ship even though it was proposed to enclose it in a puncheon of rum. The priests and others had even a stronger objection to see it buried in the sea, and in very sight of land. It was, therefore, resolved to take it ashore, in a coffin made by the carpenter, and to inter it temporarily, with a cross over the grave, whence, later, the body might be removed for definite burial in the Cathedral that had been the dead bishop's.

Dr Milner was amongst those who landed, and it was then that they encountered the negro Daniel and took him on board, where he recounted his ghastly story—partly disclosed in Mr O'Gra's letter, ten years later, to Father O'Kay:

Under some pretence or other, the brig had been brought to, and anchored off this island. The captain wanted to do something to the sails and rigging before going out into the Carribbean Sea and the Atlantic. He —Daniel—was going between the galley and the cabin where Mr and Mrs Pitt, Master Pitt, and the children were at dinner—his wife waiting at table; when, without warning, the galley door was slammed on him, and he heard shots and shouts and fearful screams. He struggled to get out, and was suddenly released—only to find a pistol held to his head. It was the half-blood Sancho, with

whom he had been in the habit of singing and playing the banjo. Sancho fired designedly over Daniel's head and whispered to him to jump overboard as all the family and his wife were dead. Daniel, terrified, was almost thrown into the water, unhurt, and a loose water cask was quickly pitched after him. Sancho fired another shot or two, wide, into the sea; and Daniel, an expert swimmer, who had promptly seized the cask, heard him say with a loud laugh, in answer to a hail from aft, that the nigger had gone overboard with one ball in his neck, and had gone under with two more in his head.

Daniel stated that he dodged under the long counter and, with the help of the rudder chains and a rope that hung foul, managed to raise himself so as to look into the cabin through one of the small stern windows.

It was a fearful sight. The murdered bodies lay untouched, the little children dead in their seats; Mrs Pitt, in the curtained doorway leading to her cabin, shot dead and yet erect, her desperate clutch at the curtain holding her up; Mr Pitt, killed before he could rise, with his head and arms hanging over one side of his chair; the boy on his face on the floor; Daniel's wife half across the table, with her arms still outstretched as if to shield the two little ones.

The captain had Mr Pitt's pocket-book, which he was examining; some of the men were opening lockers, others were drinking and laughing. Daniel dropped back into the sea, and, in defiance of sharks, and sheltering as well as helping himself with the barrel, he swam and floated and drifted to the island, where he landed and hid, but so that he could see the brig, from which the sound of snatches of song and, later, of some shots reached him.

An hour or so after his landing he was astonished to see a boat put off and pull inshore. He made sure that

he had been observed and was now being hunted down and marked for death. He gave himself up for lost. Nevertheless, he took some precautions for safety, and crept down a cleft in which ran a creek, the side being covered with shrub and some big trees, one of which he climbed and concealed himself amongst the branches.

With his heart in his mouth he heard the voices of the captain and Sancho, who forced the boat so far as they could up the creek, then made it fast to a mangrove, and got out not far from where he was. His surprise and curiosity almost overcame his fears when he saw them rig a tackle to a stout branch; and he pictured himself left swinging there for ever, for he had no doubt that they meant to hang him.

He was, however, relieved to find that they made fast to an object in the boat, which they hauled up. It was Mr Pitt's safe which had stood in the cabin. The captain —his name was Neaves—was a very powerful man, and when the safe was high enough he swung it well out and landed it. Then Sancho got a spade, and when the captain had fixed on a spot, he dug a deep hole. While he was doing that, the captain was marking some trees with a hatchet, and measuring a big overhanging branch with the tackle, by throwing a rope over it, and seemingly calculating the length.

When Sancho got out of the hole, which was then up to his shoulders, the captain trundled or hove the safe along, and pitched it into the hole, into which he also threw the tackle and block.

"How's that, Sancho?" he asked.

The half-blood stepped to the edge, when down came the hatchet on his head, cleaving it almost in two.

The captain laughed and talked to himself, telling himself that Sancho was no good, a fool and a soft heart.

He made himself a cigarette and smoked it, after which he pulled Sancho out of the hole and threw his body into the creek where it caught among some mangrove roots. The captain never looked, but filled up the hole and stuck some branches or twigs on the top, along with a lot of grass and shrub which he threw on it, and went round the trees and some rocks that he had marked, and seemed to check and make the marks and distances good. He then apparently wrote them down after carefully measuring, and looking at the sun and taking other bearings. Then he got into the boat and rowed back to the brig, which had sailed away before Dan woke up next morning. Poor Sancho's body had also disappeared, and some big alligators were still lying about the spot as if waiting for more.

Daniel said that he managed to live on shellfish, some fruit and roots and birds, sleeping at night in a tree—as far away as possible from that in which he hid on that fearsome day.

He lost count of time. He fancied that he had been there for months or years, though, as a matter of fact, it could not have been more than three or four weeks.

He was a sad wreck when taken off, in mind, body and nerve. Dr Milner had attentively cared for him, and in a few days effected a great improvement. It was he who heard the first coherent history, and advised him to say nothing about the burial of the safe until the British Consul should have been seen.

In due course Daniel made his protest, but he was arrested and died in prison, having become a lunatic—so it was said. Some believed the story, many did not—or pretended to disbelieve. But the Consul's expedition, which went with the clerical party for the bishop's coffin, returned unsuccessful, having been anticipated by

some adventurers. There had been a good deal of digging, but so far as one heard, without result. Daniel was cursed up hill and down dale; but there crept out a rumour that the enterprising syndicate, which had tried to steal a march on the Consul, had been also forestalled by somebody else. Probably, the original hider had been the finder. That is, assuming that Daniel was right.

Dr Milner wrote to his mother and sisters to see Miss Pitt who, he had learnt from the negro, was at a boarding-school in Hastings, and break the news to her, and to try and discover any relations or friends of hers. It ended by their taking the solitary girl to their own home and, in the absence of any news, or knowledge of any relations in England, keeping her as one of the family. Some five years before this date—the date of the doctor's narration to Mr Kennada and Father O'Kay—they had married, having been sweethearts, so to say, from the very first day they met, the age difference of eight or nine years being as nothing, and scarcely apparent even now.

Mr Kennada affected to be dubious, although Mrs Milner produced letters written to her by her parents whilst at school, and also those of her young brother and her deceased sister; and showed her marriage certificate, which gave her parents' names. There was, too, the evidence of the school-principal and her books and accounts, and the name of the bank that used to pay, until rumours came of Mr Pitt's death. Then the bank, as usual in such cases, had refused to make further payments, or to answer questions, or to say whether they held any money, or to give any information whatsoever. For banks can stand on their dignity, and confiscate and pilfer, and it is all right, for the very word "bank" hath a sacred sound in British ears. Dr Milner and his wife had refused to take out Letters of Administration because

the bank held them at arm's length and would tell them nothing, and also because they would not believe in the death until forced to do so—preferring to struggle on quietly rather than give up all hope. Besides, they could furnish only presumptive and not direct evidence of death.

Mr Kennada started many doubts, found many inconsistencies, and shook his head a good deal, after his kind.

Father O'Kay was pained, and getting annoyed at this hollow and cruel professional performance, so—to change the conversation rather than with the view of entering on any further line of investigation—he asked Mrs Milner whether she remembered much of South America, and of her life there.

She replied with much intelligence and animation, and, on an incidental allusion to Mr O'Gra, and the fact that his son was then in Ireland, she cried:

"What, Larry! Why, we used to play together, and he was always breaking-in ponies for me and doing all sorts of clever things: and he used to sing so beautifully and play almost any instrument. César, César,—oh, what was his name? Ah! I know, César—Fava something—ah! Favanelli—he was an Italian, and Mr O'Gra's own servant—taught him. Oh, I should like to see Larry again! I wonder whether he remembers me!"

"Oh, dhivil fly away with the luck!" exclaimed Father O'Kay, his face glowing with delight, as he gave a hand to each, "and I thank God, my children, that it's the best of luck I have—in seeing right done to you. There, there: there's the money—barring the £100 which Mr O'Gra gives to my poor. Kennada, you heathen, if you dare to say another word I'll excommunicate you, and order jigs to be danced on your unhallowed grave. Just tell me where I am to sign, and hand it over to them: and

—and, it's the dry mouth I have got and, God knows, the full heart, too; for it's seldom one sees justice on earth, or a gift from the dead come to such dear and worthy living. And if it's not a dhrink ye'll be giving me, I'll just go upstairs and help myself, and you may cry 'stop thief' till ye're black in the throat, bedad!"

"It's seldom one sees justice on earth." Is it so—or is it merely a question of time, or of kind? And what is it, in reality—retribution, reparation, compensation? Is it inexorable though tardy, or do its footsteps drag and stop because the way is long; or does time sanction the wrong because it heals or kills the wrong-sufferer; or does the wrong-doer wear it out by a sophism, or blunt it by a collect, or propitiate it by a self-pitying sigh, or beguile it by a post-mortem largesse? Can remorse arrest its chariot by prostration before the wheels, or repentance turn it by a desperate clutch at the reins? Or, can penitence lull it by walking with muffled step in the echoing corridors of conscience, or dismiss it by beating, with wild hands and clamorous self-accusation, on the walls? Can service and sacrifice acquire a title to prescription at its slackened hand? Is it but self-reflective, or is it the actual stroke of Outer Fate?

Elder Beith happened to be in the outside office when he heard those words and recognised the speaker's voice. His business was of no urgency and he went away without disturbing Mr Kennada.

"The poor benighted creature," said the Elder to himself, "walking in blindness and in the darkness of night! Does not the Lord live—and reign? And, if He reigns, He is a Judge to do justice. But is He not also a Sovereign to grant forgiveness? Mercy tempers justice, tempers it—tempers it. But—but—that does not do away with it. If—if it did, why, what would become of justice?

And is there contradiction in God? Is He not the same to-day, yesterday and forever, and without variableness or shadow of turning? His mercy endureth for ever, but —does not His justice also endure?"

And he went on his way more slowly, and less confidently, resolving the question over in his mind, and carrying it, darkly brooding, home with him.

Chapter III

Dr Milner and his wife took a pleasant cottage, close to Mr Beith's, and sent for their two children and their nurse, who, with his sister, duly came across. He had been able to extend the temporary arrangements for his practice.

They were charmed with the neighbourhood, and the bracing breath of the Atlantic was delightful to them.

It was spread about that the doctor and his pretty wife had come into some money, thanks to the cleverness and almost inexcusable honesty of Mr Kennada, and the kindly interest of Father O'Kay. No details leaked out, for the latter especially desired that the alternative once presented to him should not be known. He also thought it improper and unfeeling to let the shadow of a fearful tragedy rest, though only in the vulgar mouth and mind of a chattering public, on the lives and fortunes of the gentle couple and their children.

But, even if all that has been narrated had been matter of common talk, Mr Beith, from his cold and solitary habits, was unlikely to hear of it.

How it quite began it is not easy to say, but Dr Milner and Mr Beith were soon on accidental walking terms, and on comparative speaking terms, and on occasional

yachting terms, and, on one most exceptional day, even on visiting terms. It happened in this way:

Mrs Milner and her sister and the children had gone to Ballynoggin to do some shopping: Father O'Kay was seen coming along, and a sudden gust of wind and rain drove the three of them—the Priest, the Elder, and the Doctor—into the latter's cottage. They sat at a broad window looking out baywards, and talked about the sea, and storms and such things—with some glasses and tobacco on a table beside them. Little by little the conversation broadened, and striking incidents afloat were narrated. Mr Beith's recollections of some solemn burials at sea, recalled to Dr Milner's that of the bishop's temporary funeral at the Florida Reefs which, on Father O'Kay's intervention, led to the repetition of poor Daniel's story.

Father O'Kay almost wished that Mr Beith had remained a Scotchman in his estimation instead of a North of Ireland man as he had turned out to be—for, in the most horrific part of the narrative, he, in a manner as stolid and unemotional as if the talk were of soundings or deck cargoes, called the doctor's attention to the circumstance that some tobacco ash had fallen on his vest.

In this way it came about that Mr Beith learnt how the doctor and his family had come to live at Baleila, though only temporarily, and the strange tale of his wife being the sole surviving child of the murdered people; and of the man who had first ascertained her parents' fate becoming her husband; and how the mystery of so many years had, by such unexpected steps and turns, been helped —perhaps, in a way, elucidated—in so out-of-the-way a place as this.

Yes, assented Mr Beith in his slow frigid way, it was strange—very strange. Then they sat silent for awhile,

as men like to do, and the sun shone out again. There was a sound of wheels and the silvery laughter of women, and Dr Milner and Father O'Kay went out to meet the ladies who had evidently returned. Mr Beith had not even yet seen Mrs Milner unless, possibly, at a distance. Being thus a stranger to them, he remained behind; it would, too, have been impossible for him to escape, without running against them, for they were just coming in.

Miss Milner came into the little front garden with the Priest; then the Doctor, with one of the children on his shoulder and the other holding his hand; then his wife stood for a moment framed in the leafy oblong of the garden porch, curtained in the pendant verdure.

The Elder regarded her through the window with a look in which terror and incommunicable misery were blended. He dashed his hand to his mouth as if to prevent himself crying out. Then, quickly controlling himself, he opened the folding windows and stepped through them, and out towards his own house, almost at the instant that the ladies entered the room which he had just quitted.

Father O'Kay told them of their singular neighbour's well-known moroseness, though he had not, until now, suspected him of being a woman-hater. That discovery accounted for everything. All was now perfectly lucid and understood, he said. They laughed with him, and went in to tea.

The Elder heard those musical laughs again, as he walked towards his house, which he entered as if he had of a sudden become thirty years older.

The western wind freshened, black thunderous clouds again covered the sky, and the evening grew dark when the Doctor accompanied Father O'Kay homewards.

Some hours later, when not a window showed a light

and the only sounds were the splash and the roar and the sob of the tide, and the scream of the rising gale, Elder Beith walked heavily to the village and tapped at Father O'Kay's window.

"Don't wake Peter, but let me in—in God's name, for I must speak to you this night," said he in answer to the Priest's surprised question.

"But," said Father O'Kay, when, some minutes after, they were seated in his humble study, "but can I listen to you? Should you not go to Dr M'Donner? You are not a Catholic. I cannot hear you under the seal of confession:—I cannot give you absolution. Why—ah, why, come to me—to me—you a Presbyterian Elder, and I—a Papist priest, as you term it?"

"No," answered Mr Beith in a hollow voice, "you cannot give me absolution, I know. I don't seek it from you. I thought, I believed that I had it—from above. But, aback of the still, small voice which kept telling me that I was forgiven, was a fainter whisper, at times, that it was the voice of hope in my heart that spoke when I was fain to think it was the voice of God. And that fainter, occasional reminder, which I fought off as doubt and want of faith, is the backwater which is stronger than the stream. It is real, and the other was self-deceptive. Hear me, for I must speak: and I want to speak to you alone. I ask for no promise—do what you like with my confession: but, if you do not hear me to-night, I shall be mad or dead before morning."

* * * * * *

Hours afterwards, when the early morning broke bright and young, with the odour of tree and plant in the air, the fresh savour in the salty sea-breeze, the unreserved domestic clamour of birds, the rustle of leaves, the clarion

of cock-crow, the caw of marshalling rooks, the scream of gulls, and all the cheery sounds of a new day, as if it were the first of Creation, Father O'Kay stood at his little gate, and watched the receding figure of Elder Beith—

Watched it, as with feeble step, and bowed back, and limp arms, and dejected head, it slowly went its way, as if flaccid and feeble with the weight of newly-struck age and despair, until it effaced itself amidst the flickering shadows of the seemingly conscious and conferring trees, and was lost to sight around a turn of the silent road.

The Priest raised his haggard face and took a deep breath. How sweet it was after those morbid hours of night and dawn through which he had just passed!

He gazed at the upspringing sun as it mounted into a deep-piled mass of black cloud which lay low on the horizon—until their edges caught a rim of gold, and lances of light shot through them till, rising higher, they glowed in golden glory. Some minutes later they sailed away on some upper slant of wind in billowy wreaths of white—as if bearing souls with pardoned sins or after hallowed woes, from the lower glooms and lurid crimsons to the pure and tender blues above.

He extended wide his arms, and the signs of horror, pain and astonishment faded from his face.

"Ah, dear Lord!" he cried, "whose throne is encompassed with thick darkness and whose ways are past finding out, praised be Thy awful Name that Thou deignest to touch the hardest heart and to make Thy hand visible to men! And, oh! what ascriptions can we make for the honour to Thy poor servants that they should suffer with those who suffer—even though they be only as the crucibles to refine the gold of others and be them-

selves burnt in the process and broken thereafter! And who am I to be Thy instrument in this terrible matter?"

On his knees, beside a spring where he had stopped to bathe his hot face and aching head, the Elder was praying.

"Dread Lord! I bow before Thee, not for what Thou canst do or forbear, give or withhold, decree or refuse, but for what Thou art. Oh! if suffering would atone, or shame—behold me, behold me, ready for all. It is not fear that restrains me from giving myself up to human justice, but the dread of the self-righteous thought that suffering might appease Thee—that Thy justice might be satisfied if my blood-stained soul enter Thy presence after voluntary pains on earth. Give me, I beseech Thee, true repentance—free from fear of punishment, free from hope or desire of happiness hereafter. I will make reparation to the living—but that is nought. Yet despise not my prayer, oh merciful Lord! Do with me what Thou will'st here and hereafter; I submit to Thy justice:—but forgive me, forgive me, forgive me."

* * * * *

That day Mr Beith left Ballynoggin: and, in the evening, Mr Kennada drove out to Baleila, and, in Father O'Kay's presence, handed over to Dr Milner the title-deeds of Mr Beith's house and contents and the yacht: also transfers and certificates of stock to a considerable amount, together with a cheque on the Ballynoggin bank for some hundreds of pounds—the whole (apart from the house) amounting to something over six thousand pounds. The deed and transfers were in the name of Dr Milner, Father O'Kay and Mr Kennada as trustees for Mrs Milner and her children, with life interest to the husband.

Mr Kennada considered it an act of madness, and did not conceal his fear that this singular disposition of

property might be impugned or invalidated on that ground, and for lack of consideration, as the lawyers phrase it. Father O'Kay was not so astonished as the Doctor and his wife were, as though he had some knowledge which he did not care to divulge of the donor's motive. There was much speculation as to whether the Elder were any relation to either husband or wife, and the utmost that the old Priest allowed himself to say, with a sigh and a smile, was:

"N—no, not exactly: only a sort of connection—by blood."

And there the matter rested.

Dr Milner sold his practice and, for the time being, at all events, took up his residence near Baleila, in what had been Mr Beith's house and had now, so strangely, become his family property.

It was towards the Christmas time following that a heavy chest was delivered to Father O'Kay. It contained a quaint-looking old safe, firmly closed. Larry—who was spending his vacation at Baleila—poaching with Mike, yachting with the Doctor, singing with Mrs Milner—whom he had at once and delightedly recognised—hunting, driving, writing poetry to Kitty O'Halloran, delighting the congregations at Baleila and Kilmacartie, getting into all sorts of rows and scrapes, and being, generally, one of the most reprobated and dearly-liked fellows in the country-side—promptly claimed the safe as his father's property. As might have been reasonably expected, nobody had a key—the accompanying note to the priest explaining its loss—except Larry, who, in his harum-scarum way, amidst half a bushel of useless things—stoneless rings, broken chains and other rubbish—had a duplicate of the key, which his father one day gave him because he took a fancy to its curious Aztec head and

opal eyes. He had kept it with the one-time intention of making a scarf-pin of it.

It was apparent that violent attempts had been made to open the safe. It had been hammered, and had resisted the efforts to prize out the door, or to blow up the lock, for the aperture was not only very small but was almost closed until rendered obedient to the letter arrangement which controlled it, and thus any explosive which could be inserted was utterly insufficient in quantity to have any effect.

Larry perfectly understood the mechanism: it had long been a plaything of his: the difficulty now was to find the "word."

There were many vain guesses—words sacred, local, complicated, polyglot. At last Larry had an idea.

"Oh, I think I know," cried he. "Sure, weren't they for coming home, and to see the colleen who was here at school, and weren't the hearts of them warm with the hope of her meeting them when they set foot in the old country? Try Bettina, as they used to call her; and if that word don't do the trick I'll ate the safe itself, bedad!"

They did try it—spelling the name, by proper settings, letter by letter and—click! the key turned, and the safe opened.

Untouched, and scarcely dimmed by moisture or other cause, there lay her mother's and her sister's jewels, which she knew so well, and now lovingly kissed and wept over for their dear memories' sake: and there lay bills and bonds and deeds representing over forty thousaud pounds of English money; and there, tied up carefully, were her own letters from school and her portrait, and a tiny satin shoe of hers and some odds and ends which had belonged to her, which the fond mother had cherished whilst her child was far away across the ocean.

Ah, what was the mere wealth—the bills and the bonds, the deeds and the gems—to those loving messages from beyond the tomb; to the touch of the vanished hands, the sound of the voices now still!

Across death, across seas, by crime-blotted fingers, by remorseful consciences, by holy solaces, by many seeming chances, by the travel of inaudible footsteps in unseen paths, by the mysterious guidance of sleepless Providence —all had moved to a single plan and centred to an ordained event.

One evening in the July following, Dempsey came to Father O'Kay with an awestruck face and a whispered message. The Priest took his hat and stick without a word, and went with him.

He found in the cottage at the end of the garden—which Dempsey continued to occupy, as he remained in the Doctor's service—a feeble, white-bearded, rough-clad sailor man, who raised his eyes to his, and by them alone he recognised the Elder, Mr Beith.

Dempsey and his wife left the room.

"Thank you for coming, Father O'Kay," said he in a low, calm voice. "I am approaching the end of my journey, and I hope—oh, I humbly, humbly hope, that I have found peace—peace."

"God be thanked for His abundant mercy!" said the Priest devoutly, unmindful for the moment of the ecclesiastical irregularity of his sentiments.

"You received the safe, I know. Good. Yesterday —to-day's Monday, isn't it?—I saw them in church at Ballynoggin. She looked sweet and pure as a saint, like —like her mother glorified: and the little one like an angel from before the Presence. And I heard them sing, and watched them pray, and saw them smile when the service was over. I managed—think of it!—to talk to

the child—her child's child; the third generation! I gave her some presents, and some gold to her nurse to let me speak to her. I knelt as I asked her to put her little hands on my head, and on my eyes, and on my heart: and the innocent little creature kissed me, and again kissed her hand to me, as she was taken to the pony carriage which had, by this time, come up, whilst I slipped around a tombstone and was undiscovered. Think of it, Father O'Kay—think of it."

There was almost rapture in his tones.

A little later, he begged that he might be buried as David Neaves, his true name, in that same churchyard, and that not one word should be ever said about him, lest "they" be rendered unhappy by the association.

He handed a roll of notes to Father O'Kay with directions to give a sum to Dempsey and to apply the remainder to charitable purposes, after defraying his funeral expenses.

It was evident that he was dying. He rejected all suggestions of assistance: there was nothing bodily the matter with him, he said; and this, in a certain sense, was true.

They sat in silence for a while: his face worked as the sound of singing came from the house.

"Hold my hand, Father O'Kay," he said in a low voice. "Let me hold your hand as I go down into the valley."

After a little time he seemed to shiver, but the feeling passed, and then, almost like a child he repeated and repeated some words of a psalm, whilst the Priest's face was wet with tears.

A pause.

Then the Elder rose suddenly, with a vigorous spring, shaded his eyes with his hand, and sung out like a trumpet:

"Port! Shake out all reefs—out with them! Up topsails! Cheerily!"

Dempsey rushed in. They caught the Elder as he staggered, and laid him down.

They saw the quick movement and remains of a smile —and covered his face.

From the house rang out a gay Spanish duet in Mrs Milner's soaring soprano and Larry's rich tenor, to the accompaniment of their two mandolines.

In the cottage, in the deepening eve, knelt Father O'Kay and Dempsey.

The Priest's head was bowed as, with arms crossed on his breast, he, in a broken voice, murmured:

"*Confitebor tibi, Domine . . . in consilio justorum.*"—He glanced at Dempsey, and, for a fraction of a second, his eye lighted.

"*Magna opera Domini! . . .*

"*Sanctum et terribile nomen ejus!*"

Then, after several moments' hesitation, he recited the prayers for the dead, and Dempsey, full of wonder, responded with the Gloria—his voice trembling and choking as he uttered the concluding words, "*Nunc et semper et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen!*"

From the house there floated to their ears a sweet, plaintive air. It was the evening hymn of the simple peons on the Magdalena River.

The Old Blood

Chapter I

THERE was a good deal of excitement in Kilmacartie—which, as everybody knows, is a small township some five or six miles from Ballynoggin—and the big square kitchen at the back of O'Halloran's grocery was full of men who were drinking hard, arguing, grumbling and emitting picturesque oaths of great variety and far-reaching intent.

The December moon was in her first quarter; a salty nor'wester was roaring and screaming outside; and the men had a grievance, a feeling that duty called them to do something or other, and a wild resoluteness to do it at all hazards—if they only knew what it was.

These constituents of enjoyment were enhanced by a quarrel here and there, by some unveracious reminiscences of an elder or two, or some ingeniously-heroic but impracticable suggestions of some of the younger; and they all drank whisky and porter and smoked assiduously, and were highly comfortable around the dull-glowing peat-fire in that well-lighted, wooden-floored room.

It were uncandid to deny it: they were conspiring. They needed no masked council or wary sentinels or blood-curdling vows, for they were brothers in a great cause; and, though it was essentially a local matter, yet it lay, as a sacred principle, at the bottom of all those deep, vague, and interesting sentiments which make an Irishman

the most impassioned and grateful dupe in the two hemispheres.

They were for the Masther—the Rale O'Flaherty—to a man, and ready to commit any number of moral or statutory offences for his glory ; and they cursed his rival, Squire Brady, with whole-hearted sincerity.

It was no particular affair of theirs', that rivalry: but they took their side upon it with more ardour and unreasoning devotion than if their own merely common-place rights and interests were concerned. They were, in truth, as preposterously chivalrous about the business as were the Gallants of England when they "were up, were up for the King."

"Lave off tazing Kitty O'Halloran, Mike of Baleila," growled a gigantic citizen of seventy, without a white hair on his shaggy head. "Sure, we've business to do without being disthracted by your divarsions."

"And, faith!" said another. "I'm thinking that it's himself is more fit to hit on a schame than any man here, more by token, that there's mischief and dhivilment in it."

"Come on now, Mike," came from a third. "Ye've the name and character of an omadhoun in these parts, and well ye desarve it, bedad!"

"He does be doing that same, begorra!" chorus from the rest.

"Arrah, now," said Mike. "Sure, it's no consarnes of mine. It's to Baleila I do be belonging, and The O'Flaherty and Squire Brady are nothing to me, in a manner of spaking."

"Thrue for yez," said one, persuasively, "but if there's to be a shindy, sure it's neighbourly you'd be, and take a hand in it, for love."

"Wouldn't I!" exclaimed Mike, spitting into his right palm. "D'ye think I'd let the blessed chance go past me,

slaping or waking? And dhivil cares which side it's on, so long as it's loively and sociable enough."

"That's you, Mike ma bauchla," said the old fellow, admiringly.

"Well thin, I'll give you my poor notion of the thransaction," continued Mike. "O'Halloran, me jewel, just have some dhrink sent in, and the kettle filled, and—and —another limmin; and take yourself away to your candle-dipping at the back there; for it's yourself shouldn't know of our conthrivances and strajiments—for the sake of your grocery and post-office. Away wid yez, now!"

"Sure, it's the wise head the omadhoun's got—at times," said O'Halloran, going out.

When the replenished materials had been brought in, and the various elements properly dealt with, Mike—a well-built, clean-faced young fellow, with a laughing eye —took up his parable and, in a chatty rather than speechy manner, gave his views:

"Dhivil's the bit of sinse ye've got amongst yez, at all, at all. Here's Thady afther advising to stale the mates and jellies and things that Brady has been afther having down from Doblin for his dinner party to-morrow night; or to drop some sods and stones down his kitchen chimney. But, sure, that would be only mane and petty, and distress the ladies—that's Misthress Brady what's ill, and the beautiful coleen, what's the pride of Kilmacartie—aye, and Ballynoggin, too, for that matter—for all she's the Squire's daughter. That would shame them, and bring the tears to her swate eyes, and spoil the good food, and be a shabby and unsatisfacthory proceeding, fit for a parcel of boys who hadn't the courage to wag a shtick. I'm surprised at ye, Thady, my man."

"Thady's a fool," said the others in a clinching tone.

"There's more sinse in Donovan's idea," continued

Mike, whilst thoughtfully mixing another punch, "and that's to knock the cook from Doblin, what's come down special, on the head, or cripple him, anyway. It would be a shpoke in the Squire's wheel. But where's the fun —except for the one or two who'd administer the bating?"

"Where, indade?" sighed the conspirators.

"Sure," went on Mike, "we're not going to encourage any selfishness like that, now, or spoil a hivven-sent chance like this. We want to set the counthry-side a laughing for a year, and not marely have a vulgar, police-sarching thrifle of a broken head or two, or a spoilt dinner."

"Right, Mike. Sure, it's sinsible flashes that's in the shadow of his idle hid—at intervals," frankly admitted Thady: and Donovan swallowed a hot tumblerful with an assenting nod.

"I've been turning over in me moind what Tim Cassidy said about blocking the road, and upsetting the convey-ances of the Squire's guests, or froightening the horses: and there's a touch of talent about yez, Tim, me honey; but there's an objection to it, to my thinking, and I'll tell yez for why.

"Ye see, the Assize at Ballynoggin isn't done yet. There's the Judge and the High Sheriff and a number of lading Counsellors coming to dinner; and there's a lot of foine fellows still waiting to be thried. There's the poor men about that unplisentness at Rathgommeril fair, where two or three men was kilt and about a dozen maimed, more or less. And thin, there's the man that had the bit of discussion about the rint, and it's not a month ago the Agent was buried with half a pound of shot in his head—and more beside."

"Sure, it's the truth he's afther spaking—more pow'r to the long shkull of him!" remarked another old man, setting his glass down with emphasis.

"And would we be afther making it hard for thim, by incinsing the Judge and the Counsellors agin the people of this County? No, no. Besides, who knows but that it might be any of us, any day—for we're but poor human men-craythers, and we're all liable to have a diff'rence of opinion with a friend, or an argument with a neighbour, or a healthy koind of prejudice against a bailiff——"

"Aye, aye—and that's as sound likely sinse as iver was shpoke. Sure, it's a poor-law garden ye'd have had ought to be, Mike—when ye loike to turn on that tap, begorra!" cried Cassidy, and the rest warmly concurred.

"But Tim's not such a fool as you be doing right to think he is," pursued Mike, reflectively, "for it's the idea he's been afther giving me, all unbeknown. And if we can carry it out, bedad! we'll have the foinest fun, and the O'Flaherty will have the gloriousest upper-hand, and the County will shplit its sides, and the Squire will be shut up like a clashp knife; and the Judge and the rest will join in the hilar'ty, and there'll not be a ha'porth of malice when all's done. Think of that, now."

His audience rose at him and clamoured for particulars. He, for a moment or two, toyed with their suspense, and enjoyed the wild wide guesses which they fired at him.

"Well, then," he resumed—"it's Cassidy so far as blocking the road's consarned, but it's Mike afther that epishode, as Pater would say. Suppose, we block the road—down by that bit of furze-land about half a mile beyond where it divarges—the one going to O'Flaherty Hall and the other to Brady Castle—"

"Go on, Mike, go on. Good luck to yez!"

"Well, some of yez will be there, with lantherns, to explain about the obstruction, and to privint danger, and show another way——"

"What other way, Mike?" critically demanded Cassidy.

Mike looked round quizzingly, lit his pipe with deliberate slowness, and drawled out, between the puffs:

"The other way! Why, the bit road—a mather of a few hundred yards—that we'd make across, to strike the road to the Hall."

"And thin—and thin—" Donovan almost panted with the enquiry.

"Then—why, we would be the guides, you know: the night is sure to be dark: we'd deludher the dhrivers—they're all Ballynoggin men, for it's McIernan of the Royal Hotel who's finding the veyhicles—and maybe, we'd have a thrifle of whisky concealed about us, and make them welcome to't. And begorra!" Mike rose with his subject and his glass in hand, "before they'd know where they was, Squire Brady's guests would be shot in The O'Flaherty's Hall."

The denouement thus foreshadowed was unexpected, and the surprise, delight, wonder, and excitement were intense. After the hubbub, Mike quietly said:

"Yes, that's it; dhivil a bit less. We'll steal Brady's dinner party and hand it over to The O'Flaherty."

"Bhoys!" cried Cassidy. "This is a sthroke of janius. Here's The O'Flaherty giving a dhinner party to the officers of the Rigiment in Ballynoggin, and he's to have fifteen of thim—and his son an officer in it, too, bedad! And here's this Squire Brady, bad cess to him! goes for to give a bigger dhinner on the self-same night to the whole Assize, dhivil take it!—and he's to have about twenty of them! All done to belittle and shame the Masther. And his Doblin cooks and mates, and special woines from London, and his money galore! The upstart!

Shall we see the rale ould blood, the thrue Masther, the genuine quality, inshulted?"

They yelled, swore extemporaneously, and waved their blackthorns.

"Well then," calmly summed up the big old fellow in the corner, "shtop shouting, and let's go to work."

They quieted down to arrange their measures as methodically as if a rent collection or collector were to be settled, or a process-server to be hunted, or a mere English politician to be deluded; or as if they had undertaken a contract and were to be paid overtime.

Within an hour, some thirty men were quietly at work at various points on the sandy bit of common, and when they left off, a level hard carriage track had been made, connecting with the other bifurcation. They had lain the bushes which they had cut in their original places, so as to excite no suspicion, should anyone pass along on the following day; though they could have no serious apprehension on that point. They reserved for the next evening the removal of the shrub, the filling up of a few yards of ditch at either end, and the felling of the tall old elm which they had marked to fall across the road and thus, with the addition of the cut scrub and other matter, render the road impassable.

It was, doubtless, beautiful to think of the pure and disinterested devotion of those unspoilt children of nature to their hereditary chief. Such unfailing love, such unfaltering loyalty, such self-sacrificing jealousy for his glory, such filial care for his well-being! How rare is even the appearance of these virtues! How unspeakably rarer is the reality of those noble and ennobling feelings in this now hard and sordid world!

Only, it was all a mistake as regards The O'Flaherty. He was merely an incident—not even an Irishman; but the

local colour and worship enveloped him, ate into his being from within, encrusted him from without, and ended by subjugating him completely.

He had, as Major Royle of the first battalion of the 3rd Rid. P.F.O.L.R.Y. Bayoneteers (the "Tha-Knaws") married the only child of Dionysius O'Flaherty, a wealthy Bombay merchant, who had made it a condition of his consent —and the settlement of fifty thousand pounds, with much more to follow—that the Major should retire from the Service so soon as he could do so with the brevet rank of Lieutenant-Colonel; and, above all, adopt the name of O'Flaherty. Hence Royle O'Flaherty — popularly pronounced as it was understood as "Real," whence the distinctive prefix "The" was a natural and almost logical outcome. So he gradually became known, and considered himself, as the Rale O'Flaherty, or The O'Flaherty, for short.

His father-in-law had never been in Ireland, nor his father before him, nor, so far as could be ascertained, had any ancestor or relative. They had, over a century ago, been ruined squireens, and soldiers of fortune almost everywhere; had settled, when not killed off, in almost every country in Europe and South America, and, to a scion, altered, euphemised or translated the family name, and so had become denationalised, if not extinct. Dion of Bombay was, so far as human knowledge went, the last of his family and name.

When he died, shortly after the birth of his grandson, he settled the remainder of his fortune for the benefit of his daughter and her children and husband or husbands— for there are British lawyers in India—and left a last request that his son-in-law should buy a property in Ireland and seek out the ancient country of the O'Flaherty's, wherever that might be, and make every reasonable effort

to buy back their old property, or some of it, if ever they had any. Old Dion had been born in India and knew absolutely nothing of his family history, beyond the one elementary fact that he must have been of Irish descent, from the name he inherited.

Chapter II

After a while, the Colonel learned that, time out of mind, some O'Flaherty's held some land around Kilmacartie. Then his solicitors discovered that, very long ago, there had been sales and foreclosures ; and that, some time before the present period, a Mr Brady had purchased so much property as he could get hold of, from second or third-hand buyers from the Encumbered Estates Court, and other involved owners ; and had built himself a handsome mansion, and seated himself in the midst of his extensive and, as occasion offered, enlarging estate.

Squire Brady, as he was called, had made a large fortune in America during the war, and had then married—though rather late in life—and come to the old country with his young wife, his money, and his vigorous business habits.

It sent a thrill of pride through him when he, through his agent, heard that the Colonel was in the neighbourhood, and desirous to meet him.

He drove to Ballynoggin, introduced himself with frank simplicity, expressed the pleasure that it would give him to let the Colonel see the presumed home of his ancestors, and to be able to offer him some good old Irish hospitality.

There was perhaps, a touch of American vanity in his thought of the improvements that he should show ; there was, perhaps, a touch of sadness in the Colonel's sigh that a stranger should inhabit the land of his fathers.

For it was proper to take that view, in pursuance of the deeds which had been executed and the money that had been settled.

The Colonel and Mrs O'Flaherty spent an enjoyable week at Brady Castle. Mrs Brady and Mrs O'Flaherty became attached friends—they were both young mothers; and it was soon arranged that the Squire should sell to the Colonel a delightfully-situated farm of about a hundred acres, on which still stood some ruins, as to which tradition was mute but which might not unplausibly be assumed to be portions of the old chieftains' halls. There were, too, on that land, some undulating ground, a fine old spinney, and a pleasant curve of the river Noggin.

Before very long, an imposing country house was built; the little estate was fenced and nicely laid out in park, farm, and gardens; a road made thereto; lodges constructed, and so forth: and the Colonel settled down, and was a distinct gain to the society within a goodly radius of Ballynoggin. The local territorial Magnate was, as is well-known, the Earl of Beauvarlet, whose seat was near Baleila, but he was never at home—at that time.

O'Flaherty Hall was unquestionably a capital mansion, tastefully equipped. Probably, its finest feature was a great hall with arched ceiling, opening from the outer hall, and running from front to back of the house. Here were portraits, arms and armour of all ages and nations, sporting trophies, Oriental carvings and carpets, curious tables, old chairs, two immense old-fashioned hearths, and many other interesting objects.

The Colonel hunted, quarter-sessioned, grand juried, gave good dinners, and was, in a word, an active and haughty country gentleman.

By degrees the people had, in their imaginations, invested

him with the blood of all the O'Flahertys. Not that a vestige of history, or even of truth, had descended to any living creature as to the long-departed of that name. There was not even a bald and hoary legend about them. Until his advent—with a designation which lent itself so readily to the manufacture of a past, coupled with his own expressions, in after-dinner speeches, that he had come back, after many years, to lay his bones beside those of his progenitors, and to bring up his family where they had gathered glory and were enshrined in the hearts of their faithful adherents and tribesmen—it is doubtful if anyone in the country-side had ever associated the name therewith.

But it mightily pleased the folk of Kilmacartie to convince themselves that the Colonel was the "rale ould stock," "the good ould blood," "the Chief come to his own again—glory be to God!" Why, in the absence of fact, cause, or reason, except what they delighted to imagine and delude themselves with, they should have so warmed to him in their hearts and become so proud of him, it is hard to say.

But it was certain that they felt more grateful for one angry glare of his proud yellow eye, than for all the substantial benefits which Squire Brady conferred upon them.

The Colonel fired their fancy and kindled the romance, which they made for themselves: the Squire found them work, built them good houses, made roads, established factories and infirmary, introduced improved methods of farming, and did other prosaic and worldly good.

The Colonel treated them like coolies. This impressed them with the sense that they were creatures of an inferior clay, and they almost worshipped him. The Squire wished to raise them to a conception that they were

responsible beings, capable of working and washing. But sanitation is a cold-blooded subject, prudence is unsentimental, and active benevolence touches a finely-tempered chord of contempt in the recipients: and so the one was disliked as heartily as the other was idealised and idolised.

What a chance was lost by some Irish prophet of old in failing to slide adown the stream of time the prediction that his countrymen would always misplace the overflowing affectionateness of their hearts, and always exercise profound cleverness in acting wrongheadedly under almost all conceivable circumstances!

Some three or four years before the meeting at O'Halloran's grocery, to which reference has been made, the Colonel and the Squire had greatly quarrelled, and everybody was aware of the bitter feud that was raging between them. All intercourse between the two families was broken off—to the sincere grief of the ladies and the young people, who had been very intimate, the children having almost grown up together. Mrs Brady was now an invalid, and of all her children only one remained—Patricia, or Patsey as she was more commonly called. Mrs O'Flaherty—whose only son, Dion, was now a subaltern in the second battalion of his father's old regiment, stationed at Ballynoggin—had two charming young daughters at home with her: and it was a matter of abiding regret that the disputes of the two gentlemen —and over politics, too—should have created a gulf between them.

Of course, the young people were bound to meet occasionally at other houses, or at balls, concerts, flower-shows and such like; and, it was well known amongst the ladies, young and old, that Dion and Patsey had between them no insurmountable political differences or

other grave causes for hatred. Their respective fathers had commanded that everything be at an end between the Hall and the Castle, just as a gas or water company might order a supply to be cut off if a tenant refuse to pay his predecessor's arrears; and they, mere men as they were, concluded that cut off it was.

The enmity became almost a scandal. The Colonel, who had become so deeply imbued with the idea of his ancient Irish line and hereditary local greatness, had grown almost tyrannical and arrogant. The Squire—whose disposition had not been sweetened by the loss of his boys and the graceless ingratitude of the people around him—was not a man either to fawn or to suffer discourteous or unreasoning contradiction, or to abate his perfect independence. He was not morose or unpleasant or aggressive; in fact, he was singularly free from the vices and failings of the newly-enriched. And it implied much for the calm genuineness of his character that his long residence in America had left him modest, simple-minded though shrewd, and very natural and gentlemanly in his demeanour. But he was a strong-willed man: and the Colonel was, in comparison, as stucco is to marble.

It was almost childish, in a sense, the way those two old gentlemen fought their quarrel before the world. The Colonel had said openly that he would horsewhip the Squire, but that he was such a little prig. The Squire had announced, publicly, that he would shoot the Colonel, but that he was such a big fool: and so matters went on.

If one gave a ball, a prize for a show, a cup for a race, the other tried to trump the card by something better. If one stood for some office, or supported one candidate, the other duly and energetically opposed him.

The gentry—the facing-both-ways portion of the com-

munity—were naturally on their guard, and selfish as usual. Here and there some little partisanship would be displayed; but, on the whole, the cool and smiling class, as everywhere, contrived to sail on its own keel, and to dine with both.

But the common people, who are so stupid and unconventional as to be true to nature and to themselves (and who may, some day, find out the uncommon people), made no disguise of their feelings. They sided unreservedly with the Masther—the Rale O'Flaherty. Every affront they took home to their own bosoms; every point scored by the Squire made them burn with resentment. They followed each turn of the duel, each vicissitude of the vendetta; and every incident that happened (and many that did not), was duly caught, polished, enlarged, sub-edited, published, and commented on, hilariously or blood-thirstily, according to the circumstances.

If the Colonel had been the veritable author of one-tenth of the smart things which were attributed to him, he would deserve to have his name live as long in the ages to come, as he made believe that his blood had coursed in the ages past, beside the Kilmacartie hills and the hoarse-resounding bays some few miles away.

The witty repartees, the withering sarcasms, the discomfiting rejoinders, the crushing allusions, the cutting comparisons, and the endless good things—humorous, scathing, haughty, condescending—which The O'Flaherty was credited with pouring out, like a torrent fed by unfailing snows, were enough to establish an immortal reputation for any six men of the brightest calibre. All the wit of half a dozen townships was disinterestedly concentrated upon him, as its source, centre and focus. His humble but faithful friends—to whom, by the way, he never deigned to speak, or gave anything—brought

their own best things and sacrificed them at his shrine; and although there was a backwater of unbelief as to the authenticity of the clever things supposed to be said by him, yet nobody ever raised the question. For, apart from politeness—and the Irish peasant is very much a gentleman at heart; it is only his son, for whom he has painfully procured some education and a footing in some profession or town avocation, who is so often a coarse, violent and unrestrainable nuisance, not worth the mud on his father's brogues;—there was the fitness of the alleged quotation, and fancy could drive it home and impart the gratified feeling that it was "one for the Squire, anyhow." The verity or the reverse was a minor point: the pith lay in the appositeness. The Kilmacartians were ready to lie themselves black in the face in the cause of even the seeming truth.

Well, on the day of the rival dinners, matters fell out exactly as planned. The carriages of the Squire's guests were stopped by the shouts and lanterns of the men who had been stationed there, and who told their story of the tree that had been blown down across the road, and so on; but, they added, men had been at work all day to make a bit of road around the obstruction—where they could get it solid enough—and they were there to conduct them.

"What a people!" sighed the Judge to the High Sheriff. "Here they have employed twice as many men, for twice as many hours, in making this temporary détour, as it would have taken to clear the road for good and all. What a people!"

Meanwhile, the carriages were being led along the new path, the numerous lights here and there amidst the intense darkness greatly mystifying the drivers, and the explanations, jokes, and convenient bottles of the guides

disarming suspicion and diminishing responsibility. In a short time they were through the gates, up the avenue, and the occupants of the equipages were inside O'Flaherty Hall, whilst the convoy scattered into the darkness. The drivers and horses were taken by the Colonel's grooms to the stables, where plenty of cheer awaited man and beast.

The Colonel's guests—in full uniform—were gathered in the magnificent, well-warmed and lighted hall, and Mrs O'Flaherty and her daughters were chatting pleasantly with some of the officers, and affecting, as ladies can do, not to hear the scuffling and commotion in the outer hall, when, to everybody's stupefaction, the heavy curtains between the two tall columns were withdrawn, and the long judicial procession filed in.

The O'Flaherty advanced to meet them.

The High Sheriff exclaimed — "Why, Colonel O'Flaherty! And—to be sure—this is your house—not Mr Brady's."

"Not Mr Brady's!" thundered the Judge. "Not Mr Brady's! What's the meaning of this, Sir?" His fat face glowed purple with indignation.

Chapter III

THE Colonel could only assume, as an obvious consideration, that the drivers had mistaken their way.

But the Clerk of the Peace—who had had a taste of the Colonel's hauteur, and who knew of the animosity between him and the Squire—hinted that the mistake might not have been unintentional.

Whereupon the Colonel turned furiously upon him, and then the Judge said that he should hear further from

him, and demanded his carriage; and everybody was talking and gesticulating at the same time—except the officers, who, of course, put on stolid faces which expressed no more than if they had been the court cards of a new pack.

Mrs O'Flaherty came forward and endeavoured to assuage the storm; but the Judge strode to the front door, ordered it to be opened, and—with his own hands pounced on Mike, who was looking in.

"Bring him in, bring him in," was the cry. "We'll get to the bottom of this extraordinary outrage."

He was dragged in, and set in the midst of some two score of elegantly-dressed people. There was a twinkle in his eye as he looked quietly round him at the armour and pictures and lights; but he speedily assumed an inimitable air of bewilderment, humility and ignorance.

Question after question was showered upon him. Mike had little to say. He didn't belong there at all. He thought a thrifle of a job might be going, to help with the horses or other things. How did they get there? Faith then, and they had better be afther asking their dhrivers—who were now well on the way back to Ballynoggin, he was thinking, for fear of the mistake they'd made in the black night. Well, perhaps his honour was right; he knew more than he'd told, for he was only a poor boy, and not much used to be afther confedherating with the Quality.

"Do you know that this is his lordship, the Judge?" solemnly asked him one of the Counsel.

"Well, thin, he can't hang me—and it's all the same to Mike if he could, for dhivil a word will I say to get any mother's son into throuble at all, at all; and his lordship can do as he likes with me, or send me across the says, or have me put away for the rest of my unnatural

loife; but sorra the name will I name, if I'm to be hanged and quartered for everyone I refuse to mintion."

They stared at him with some admiration, and smiles began to break on some of the faces.

"But what was it for? Where was the sense of it? What was the object of misdirecting us?"

"Faith then, and it was just this. The O'Flaherty was to have only fifteen guests this blessed night, and the Squire—that's Squire Brady—must choose this same toime for his dinner, and was to have twenty of yez; and how was ignorant people to know that lawyers don't be counting for as much as officers, who're gintlemen? Sure, it's only by the quantity they goes and not by the thrue value."

Mike added this commentary with the most natural air imaginable, and he seemed surprised at the peals of laughter which followed it.

He looked simpler than ever as he went on, in the tone of a man stating a self-evident proposition:

"Sure, an' we couldn't be expected to see such an affront put on the Masther; so we just agreed to bag the lot of yez, saving yer presence—and land yez all here, so's the Masther would have thirty-five, and the Squire not a blasted one."

There was roar upon roar when he stopped; and the Colonel repeated his assurances, that he had known nothing whatsoever about the ridiculous stratagem, and offered to get all the carriages he could muster and himself convoy them to Brady Castle.

The situation was too absurd. His lordship declared that nothing should induce him to venture out again into the night, dinner or no dinner. Whereupon Mrs O'Flaherty begged them all to stay, and they would make shift some way or another.

"Hark you, sir," said the Judge sternly to Mike. "I should like to know the man who originated this unique scheme; or did you combine your wits on the subject, eh?"

"Yes, me lord," answered Mike, respectfully, without a twitch in his face. "You see, sir, when we bhoys put our hids—and shticks—together, the atmosphere is full of foine ideas and—and—of bits of skull, as well, sometimes, the hivvens be praised!"

Mike looked childlike-innocence itself when he said this: there was a shout of laughter, and the High Sheriff told him that he should have to hang him some day, but meanwhile he had better go and keep the coachmen together for the home journey, later, and take the sovereign, which he gave him, for his impudence.

"My dear Mrs O'Flaherty," said the Judge, "you must not think of interfering with your dinner. Take your guests: let us have a bottle or two of wine, and we shall make our way back—later on, later on—" but this was spoken falteringly.

Major Murphison, who was the senior officer of the Battalion, joined The O'Flaherty in deprecating any division. "United we sit—and dine," said he, "Divided we stand—losing time and spoiling the fish."

"And if there's not enough to go round," said a leading Counsel, "those who have fish shan't have soup, and *vice versâ*."

"As to that," observed the Major. "The O'Flaherty's cellar is good, and that's the main thing. As for the solids, faith! and if there's bacon and eggs enough in the house, we'll go for that—and I'm the boy to fry it, too. Ah! it's a trate, ye'll say, when once you get a taste of it."

Finally, amidst much laughing and talking—for Arms

and Law had by this time got pleasantly mixed together —it was decided that all available tables should be laid in the hall—as had been done on many a festive occasion before—and that dinner should be served when ready, and made to go so far as possible, seeing the unexpected irruption of twenty more diners.

Whilst these arrangements were being carried out—those who were not helping were talking, and all were drinking freely at side tables—the Colonel had written a letter to Mr Brady, explaining the circumstances and expressing his regrets. He showed it to the Judge.

"Ask him to come along and join us," said his lordship. "Oh yes—I know of the ridiculous falling-out of you two. It is childish—two gentlemen, neighbours, excellent fellows both—all about some trumpery trifle, I'll be bound. Ask him to come, sir, on my advice. Now."

"Please do, Dad," pleaded Dion; and then he brought his mother—who, woman-like, did not request, but uttered her delight, and thanks, and compliments for his having done it. So he was fain to re-write his letter.

"And I'll take it myself," said Dion, with a high colour on his handsome young face, "as well as the letter the Mater is writing to Mrs Brady."

"We'll go with you as a deputation," cried the jolly old Major, "the Doctor and I. We'll get a carriage out at once."

That astute campaigner had formed a plan to revictual the fort.

"Don't hurry too fast with the dinner," he shouted, before he left. "I'll want you to judge of my skill in cooking. We'll be back inside of no time. Play light in the manewhoile."

The company at length sat down, and there was a continual ripple of merriment. It was the most uncon-

strained and enjoyable dinner at which anyone there had ever assisted. The Judge insisted on each guest selecting either soup *or* fish, and either one entrée *or* another, notwithstanding Mrs O'Flaherty's assurances that there was plenty of everything, as was, indeed, evident. But there was a boyish delight all round the table in converting a formal dinner into a sort of bivouac or picnic, and in serving and eating informally.

They were scarcely conscious that any appreciable time had elapsed, when the Major and the Doctor returned, and the butler announced Mr Brady. All rose from their seats and hailed him with a rousing cheer. Mrs O'Flaherty unaffectedly spoke her joy: and her husband frankly gripped hands with him, repeated his regrets and turned a graceful phrase that he should now cease to be sorry since it had brought him to the Hall once more.

The Squire suitably replied—all this having passed in a very few moments—and then sat down beside his hostess —breaking out, after a minute or two, in a ringing burst of laughter, which set the entire table to a loud accompaniment; for, verily, the whole thing was so exceedingly droll, and—as the Judge said—possible only in Ireland.

Nobody seemed to miss Dion—except, perhaps, his mother, if her occasional looks towards the door could be so interpreted. A close observer would not have had many doubts on the subject—especially after she had, on some trifling pretext, sent her eldest daughter, Valentina, to procure something or another which she feigned a wish to show, and which only her daughter could find.

She turned her head quickly as one of the side doors in the hall opened, and Valentina returned, smiling and nodding. She was followed by Dion, with Patsey, looking radiant and lovely, on his arm.

The gentlemen all rose. Mrs O'Flaherty kissed her,

whilst the Squire seemed too surprised to speak. Dion led her to his father, who looked from the one to the other. Then he, too, kissed Patsey's glowing cheek, and simply said—"I see, I see, I see."

"Yes, sir," said Dion, diffidently yet courageously. "My sweetheart from a boy, dad. And now, thank God! we shall not have to deceive our fathers any more by pretending that all was over between us. It never was, and never will be—will it, Patsey?"

Patsey blushed, and then she looked up coyly into the Colonel's face, and lovingly into her lover's, and said, quietly but firmly, "No, Dion."

And so it was all understood; and the Judge kissed her and made many jokes, and the Squire was very happy in the few remarks which he made, inasmuch as they concluded with the significant words that Patsey was his only child, and all he had should be her's.

"Mrs O'Flaherty," cried the Major, from the other end of the table, "will you plaze order the servants to clare complately away, when you've gone, for we must relay the tables for supper. We've requisitioned the Squire's dinner—all but the soups—and brought it along in a brake, a brougham, and a gig. It will be all nicely cooled in another hour or so, and it's the Doctor and meself will take the superintendence: and we'll put the Chief at the one end, and the Squire to face him at the other, and all ourselves between."

This speech was received with much applause.

"I am really not to blame, my dear Mrs O'Flaherty," laughed Mr Brady. "The Major carried me by storm, packed me off, and demanded a free hand."

"And very civil it was of him to ask at all," said the Judge, "seeing that he was, for the time being, in the enemy's country."

"Now, don't be afther wasting your beautiful appetites on jellies and confectionary bedhivilments," proclaimed the Major, in persuasive tones. "Kape them for the Squire's supper in the Chief's Hall. Sure, it's only fair, and it's an act of justice we'll be perpethrating—without disrispict to his lordship and the Bar, who won't object for this once—seeing that they're off duty."

He bowed with grave reverence to the Judge and the barristers, and humbly added that such an act, under the circumstances, need not be a precedent; and the leader of Bar said that they should all lose their characters if it became generally known that they had so far degenerated from Law as to sink to Justice.

"There's ven'son and bafe and turkeys and tongues and turbot and salmon," went on the Major, "and Southdown saddles from London, and trout from Killarney, and pheasants from Norfolk and mutton from Arran, and pineapples and paches, and lots and lashings of delicacies and sundries beyond all enumeration, for it's not an automoton catalogue I am, bedad! And, hear to this, now! Meself and the Doctor there—for all he looks so innocent—will do a mighty mixed grill of birds of all sorts that will set you dhraming of Paradise and give you a thirst that angels might envy. And, faith! it will be enough to timpt us all to fall out, for no rayson at all, at all—as is generally the case—so as to fall in again, by the pow'rs!"

The Major, as usual, succeeded in kindling enthusiasm. When that company separated, after dawn—the ladies, of course, had not assisted at the supper—it was unanimously acknowledged, with deep sincerity but with questionable coherence, that the evening had been passed very pleasantly; in fact, that it had been the most uproariously glorious night that any of them had ever known.

A gifted young barrister improvised some lines, and sang them with much gusto, and he announced his intention to publish them under the title of "Kilmacartie, and the Stolen dinner-party."

* * * * *

There was a merry drinking, interspersed with two or three highly delectable fights, at O'Halloran's, on the following night. Squire Brady had sent him a five-pound note for the boys to spend, and they drank his health with delighted yells and with tears in their eyes.

"Sure," said Donovan, "The Rale O'Flaherty—that's Masther Dion—will now thruly come into what's not his own, and niver was—glory be to God!"

"Yes," sighed Mike. "It's all right. But dhivil take the good luck of it—for we've been and overdone it: and it's mighty dull ye'll be now, with sorra a quarrel or a grayvance. Never mind! Here's to swate Patsey Brady that's to marry the young Chief! And here's to the Rale Ould Blood that's to come out of that manoover. Huroo!"

Mike the Omadhoun

Chapter I

MIKE of Baleila—he was more commonly known as Mike the Omadhoun—was so used to see disaster dog his footsteps with fatal precision that the amicable upshot of that abducted dinner-party upset him a good deal. It was, no doubt, very nice and pleasant to the Quality—the parties immediately concerned; but it was a tame sequel from his point of view.

Small wonder, therefore, that he fell into a fit of dejection and transient industry.

He lived uneventfully for some weeks and sighed to think that he was dying down to hard and acrid respectability, though some little incidents had flecked the stagnancy of existence and borne up his life in some degree.

There was, for instance, that diverting episode—nigh to a tragedy—of the Excise supervisors whom he met in the hills when he was seeking illicit game, and they illicit stills; and whom he wandered and left stranded at night without compass, chart or guidance, beside a black bottomless tarn. He gained renown, money, and an official letter of thanks, for securing help and heading a discovery and relief party next day: but the joy lay not in those things.

Then there was that other matter when he swam out to a disabled Dutch brig which had taken the sand on a spit off the dreaded Monk's Head.

Also that comical affair of the fiddler, who had intended to default at a wedding in an outlying village, whom he kidnapped, together with his fiddle; and with whom he became the best of friends—having first broken his head and then filled him with as much liquor as would make an entire orchestra in any other country lapse into limitless rests or undiscretionary tremulos.

It is scarcely worth while alluding to a few fights here and there; the bonfire of a lawyer's clerk's papers which that person, himself, was compelled to light; the miracle —or coincidence as infidel black Protestants would call it —which hung a capital haunch of mutton in Father O'Kay's cupboard when the Vicar-general unexpectedly visited him, and when there were only a bit of bacon and some eggs in the house; and the unaccountable disappearance of a similar joint from the larder of Mr M'Phail, who had a big house on the Ballynoggin Road, and was proportionately hated as a man, a Scot, a magistrate, a freemason, a Presbyterian, and a fish-factor.

As to poaching, that was neither here nor there. Mike always had half a dozen or more dogs boarded out with the hillside cottagers, and a normal following of considerable strength and variety.

There was not a depraved or outlawed dog within miles which did not affinatively attach itself to his heels.

Nor was there any staid or reputable animal which, once in his society or within his sphere of influence, failed immediately to develop wild and dishonest habits—reverting at a bound, and without prompting, to ante-evolutionary conditions of mind and morals.

There can be no better proof of the power of sympathy, by working which egotistical weakness, and "the terrible power of familiarity," which Carlyle says gave Mirabeau

such subjugating ascendancy over his fellows, the tactful animal is proudly able to claim that the noblest conquest of the dog is—man.

Mike poached for sport, and because it was actually illegal and theoretically sinful. When he was successful game was abundant in many a cottage and cabin. During the sedate period to which reference has been made, he had a rousing carouse with Lord Beauvarlet's keeper, and they regaled on Squire Brady's birds and a great jar of mountain whisky which no shadow of the Revenue had polluted. On the following day he held fierce festival with Squire Brady's keeper, assisted by a twin-jar, when they critically relished his lordship's game.

But these were mere hum-drum interludes: he longed for excitement. His mother, who kept the inn at Baleila, and his pretty cousin, Mary, somehow lacked appreciation of his help at home. They said that he was mighty inconvenient, and that his hospitality was too splendid. The women of the village, too, came clamouring to retrieve their husbands, fathers, sons, or other male belongings; and his Reverence said that he could always tell when Mike was helping in the house, for the noise of the singing could be heard for a mile, and dhivil a hand's turn of work was done in the locality.

One blazing hot morning he was sitting outside, with some wisps of straw-hat hanging on a curl or two at the back of his head, repairing some fishing-tackle. He was talking to himself, and singing, in a scrappy intermittent sort of way.

"She turned her back on me, so she did, did Mary! 'You're the idlest bhoy in the county,' sez she, 'and it's listen to a gomeraun like you, indade!' sez she, and she tossed her hid like a speritted filly. Well, thin, dhivil may care, say I.

I'm not half good enough for you,
Molly O'Mara, Molly O'Mara;
But my heart is tendher and true,
As if all the world held but us two,
Molly O'——

"Och, it's spoiling I am for a bit of honest divarsion. Sure, it's mighty miserable it is being vartuous; and where's your thanks if you go to be a public benefacther —for other people? Sorra a bit. The next time I go a public-benefacthering it will be for myself alone, begorra!

And shall we sit still while the tyrant is boashting?
Shall the sons of proud Clare——

"Bad luck to it for an ending! Here's The O'Flaherty and the Squire as friendly as if they'd never known each other, and all is swate and pleasant—for them, and not a ha'porth of quarrel or disturbance left to cheer us. I've been the manes of killing all the fun, ochone!

Sure, an' I'm too young to marry,
Sez she—an' she rowled her eye:
Now, don't you think we'd better tarry?
Sez she—and she rowled her eye.
Sez he, if that's so, then, by Ould Harry,
My broken heart, and gould, I'll carry
Across the raging says to Pari—
Troth then, and bedad, will I.

"Faith! and that's my case intirely, for it's broken-hearted I am, too, barring the gould: and it's disperate enough I am to go to Pari myself, and that's next door to the bad place itself, by all accounts, for it's the height of good company they do be having there."

Then he took to singing again—his pronunciation being here macadamized for the common intelligence.

Mr and Mrs Timothy Callaghan
Lived in the basement of house No. 4;
But, alas! now, they never more shall again
On their neighbourhood beam as they did of yore.

She was gentle and kind, with an affable smile,
Which glistened extensively when left alone.
Her soft sparkling eyes show'd a heart void of guile
And she weighed, I should say, over seventeen stone.

And Tim was the pattern of as decent a boy
As ever had a drop—in immoderation.
To be social and free was the height of his joy—
It always took three to get him to the station.

"Ah, Mary! you'll maybe think better of me when I'm under the green sod . . . Oh, it's the light of me eyes she is. She's listening now, I'll go bail. Listeners always do hear good of themselves—if it's said on purpose, of coorse."

At this point Mary, who had overheard the *aside*, shut down the half-window with a bang, and Mike laughed and winked as if his eyes were heliographing to each other.

He resumed his elegy:

'Twas rather bad form for Michael O'Brannigan
To get himself mix'd in a connubial dispute:
Still, the point's doubtful, for Mrs Callaghan
Rendered the crisis somewhat acute.

It is ambiguous how the discussion arose,
But there came a coolness—that 'tis no use mincing:
For they exchanged some remarks—and some glasses and blows
With an aim and an emphasis truly convincing.

The late M. O'Brannigan doubtless intended well;
And, in fact, he had paid for the ultimate bowl.
'Twas he, not the quarrel, that was then ended well;
The police took the Callaghans, and angels his soul.

The sad, mourning friends, of both parties bereft,
Tearfully bade them a pathetic "good-bye, all."
Then they drank up the liquor the combatants left,
And gaily looked forward to the Inquest and Trial.

He threw some extraordinary tones and quaverings into the tune, as if he were deeply touched with the sentiment —especially with the concluding stanza.

"The Lord be good to us, but what's the craythe r afther doing now?"

Mike looked half round and saw old Peter, Father O'Kay's servant, before him.

After the usual salutations—and very gracious they are amongst the real Irish country-folk—Peter said:

"It's business I've to tell you, Mike, this blessed morning—serious business."

"Och, if it's sarious it will kape, and grow mellow with the kaping," answered Mike, apprehensively.

"But I must tell it you, for I shall want your help, and there's things that concern you——"

"Is it anybody who'd be mended by a bating, or has been saying or doing any hurt, or kaping back his dues? Or is anyone coming to see his riv'rence and the cupboard bare, or, or——" asked Mike.

"No, no," laughed Peter, "that's all right. The people are good, very good. There are not softer hearts or harder fishts in the county-side than in this parish, glory be to God!"

"Amen to that same!" said Mike devoutly.

"Well then, you mind of that Dutch ship——"

"Oh, aye," observed Mike, with unassumed indifference, "but rowl in your news, Pater ma bouchal."

"Low thafe that captin was, or he could never be so mane. He tould Mr M'Phail at Ballynoggin that he'd bring process for some things as he'd lost, or been robbed of, as he said; and refused to pay a shilling to the men as saved his ship and crew and his own dhirty self. He said he'd let the insurance people do that same."

"Dhivil fly away with him and his money, too. I

wouldn't touch it with a stable-fork," said Mike indignantly.

"And he said," resumed Peter, "that we was a poor-spirited lot here to neglect our opportunities, he said. What a splendid coast for smuggling, said he, and these lazy Irish don't use it, he said."

"That's it," cried Mike, with disgust. "Never a blashted furriner comes to Ireland but he talks of our neglected industries, as they call it, drat them! Why, if it's so hard for a poor man now to get a job of wurruk, what would it be if there was more industries? Sure, it's miserabler we'd be, with less to do for more of us. It stands to rayson."

"Thrue for ye," replied Peter, "or, more to do for less of us, and it's all one, anyhow. Sure, it's the sinsible things you can say at odd times, Mike. Well, they was so angered and ashamed at Ballynoggin—the Quality and the officers and the merchants—with that Dutch baste, that they've subscribed the money for to give you a prisint——"

"Pater," said Mike quickly and earnestly, "can't you conthrive that the prisint shall be for Mary inside there? Wasn't she there, with all the people standing white-faced on the shore and on the rocks at the Creek side, with the jagged ends and shreds of waves and spray dashing like pellets on their cheeks; and wasn't it she who said 'Go, Mike, and the good God be wid ye, for it's the lives of His craytures you'd be saving'—when my own mother was for houlding me back? Oh, Pater, it's she who should have it, by rights, and you must manage it, if you love me."

"Indade and he must *not*," cried Mary, suddenly appearing from the Inn, her beautiful eyes afire.

Mike promptly turned the subject by saying to Peter—

"It's the thick hid entirely I do be having this day. Won't ye be passing indoors and have a taste? It's yourself knows the way, Pater, ye sowl."

"Ah," said Peter, "the Lord be with the times I've gone over this step! God and Mary save this house and all whom it's sheltering!" and the three went in.

Peter had other news as well, and a service which he desired of Mike.

That was no less than to travel down to Cork and bring back a young man—a dark young man—to Baleila: "Off colour, more like," said Peter with a smile.

It appeared that a brother of Peter's had, very many years before, gone to America, and, after numerous shiftings and adventures, had settled down in Bolivia and accumulated a very fair fortune in mining, trading and planting. The lad whom he had sent home was his only child: the mother had died when he was only three years old. She was the daughter, by a Creole mother, of a general of old Spanish blood. It was, he told his brother, a great grief to part with the boy, but it was for his good, though he had had him taught as well as he could, and had even kept a tutor—an old Italian exile of many accomplishments—living in the house for the past ten years. He had now despatched him to Ireland, with an ample bank provision, in order that he might have the best possible College education, for which purpose he had besought Father O'Kay's assistance.

He had instructed Larry, it was added, to disembark at Queenstown, and go to a hotel in Cork and there post the letters which he had given him to the priest and his brother. This had been done, the young man, himself, writing to both, and surprising them with the evidence of tuition, and even of good breeding, which his letters disclosed.

Now, as the Father was rather unwell just then, Peter could not leave him; so he wished Mike to go and convoy him.

"A naygur!" exclaimed Mike superciliously.

"Shame to you, Mike!" cried Mary. "Sure, there's something delightful in the idea of Mr Peter's brother keeping the memory of his own village, where he was born, green and warm in his heart after all those long years away in foreign lands; and of his love for that boy, his son, although he may be a bit of a naygur; and sending him home, across the wide says, to get larning, the best to be had. I know that the boy loves him back with all the heart of him; and at this very moment the ould gentleman far away is, may be, reckoning the time of his lad's arrival here, and wishing himself was here, too. Ah! and he's dhraming and remembering when he was a boy in this same village, and wondering who's left alive and who's gone to glory; and, maybe, as the water rises to his eyes at the looking back across the storm and the sorrows of the years that have passed, longing and fain to kiss the very stones of the streets which his young feet knew so long, so long ago. And you'd think it demaning to go, and guide that lad, in a counthry that's strange and new to him, because he's of another colour!"

Mary was a very lovely girl, tall, dark, lithe. Now her beauty was all aglow with pride, feeling and fine indignation. Her face perfectly reflected her animated little speech.

"I *am* ashamed, Mary dear," said Mike humbly. "I spoke before I thought—as I generally do be doing, and it's a poor hand at thinking I am, anyway. Peter, say the word and I'm your man, and, begorra! I like the bhoy already. And all's one whether he's say-green, or sky-blue, or ebony-black, or any other shade, hue, complexion

or colour, or all of them together, bedad! like a paycock, or a dhrum-major or an earthquake—rainbow, I mane—begorra! That's settled, and here's good luck to him! Huroo!"

Chapter II

WELL within ten minutes of Mike's delivery of Peter's letter to young O'Gra at the hotel in Cork, he and that sunburnt gentleman were bosom friends. The latter was a tall, straight, powerfully-built fellow, with a merry face and a musical voice; dark, certainly, but with fine features, European in cut; eyes large, soft and oval, and hair crinkled in shiny wavelets: altogether—strapping, handsome and gentlemanly; well dressed in tweeds with snowy linen, gold watch and chain, and a sparkling ring on his finger.

"Pater doesn't be suspecting that he's only a thrifle mixed-colour uncle, I'll go bail," said Mike to himself, whilst the other was reading a note.

"Faith! and it's meself's deloighted to see ye, Mike," said the young fellow with a delicious West Country brogue, crumpling the letter into his pocket and giving him a hearty grip of his hand. "Call me Larry from this out, d'ye moind. Now, what will ye dhrink?"

"Mother o' Moses!" exclaimed Mike. "Sure, an' he spakes as if he was born in the finest stye in Baleila," and he looked at him with almost superstitious astonishment.

Larry laughed loudly.

"Begorra!" he replied, "it's just the way I've always shpoke, and mighty quare I thought it whin I heard them talk in New York—when I'd to go on a furrin ship so's to take the stamer to Queenstown. My father and I

were the only two as shpoke it in our own country barring a few merchants and planters. It's Spanish they talk there all the toime."

His surprise over, Mike took to him at once: he was such a cheery, frank, good-looking fellow: such a miracle of a cross-bred Irishman from another world; and imparting such piquancy and richness to his enunciation and language.

They had a drink or two, and strolled about the town. They proposed to leave for Ballynoggin by an evening train, stay there the night, and drive over to Baleila with the luggage in the morning.

"That's where a lot of low blagyards inshulted me yesterday," said Larry, as they passed a narrow and populous street, "and set up cries at the colour of me hoide, and threw shtones afther me."

"Tare an' 'ounds!" growled Mike, "wait till I get a wholesome shtick for ye, and we'll go and make lanes amongst them."

"No, no," said Larry, "sure, dhivil the bit I'm caring, at all."

"Let's get yez a dacent shtick, anyhow," persisted Mike. "No gintleman's outfit's complate wid a whisp like that in your hand. What satisfaction or enjoyment is there to be got out of the like of that?" queried he, contemptuously.

"Oh, but it's not the shtick I want when I do be wanting it," answered Larry. "Many's the botheration I've been in, and it's always well served I've been by the long arms of me and the hammer of a fisht at the ind of them, which has knocked down many a woild steer. And I've a hid on me, Mike, which I'll wager to break any door that's made of wood, or double up any man as I can get a fair go at, bedad!"

Mike regarded him with intense admiration. They continued their walk and chat—being stared at and jeered at occasionally; but they took no notice.

Mike had formed a plan. He knew perfectly well—though a stranger to the city—that he had only to interest the street next to the delinquent one to obtain all reasonable support: for every two adjoining streets, or the two ends of the same street, would naturally be at feud in any Irish town.

Reckoning on this assured factor—and modestly underestimating his own electric affinity which never failed to secure him any amount of misguided but earnest co-operation in the composition and maintenance of any lively proceedings—he and Larry found themselves in a public-house and, in a very short while, the centre of much curiosity and sympathy.

A little hospitality, a song or two, and a few observations relative to the inhabitants of the neighbouring streets —and the whole affair was organised.

"Look here, now," said he to some of the more influential local citizens by whom he was surrounded, "this is what we'll do. Mr Larry, here—who's a prince or a king beyond the says, but as good an Irishman as the Pope himself—and me, we'll sthroll down the street with a tread-on-the-tail-of-me-coat expression in the corner of our eyes. Thin, when the shindy begins, and they start on us, we will just play aisy about their hids, and I'll give a whira-whoo. Thin you"— to a one-eyed, red-headed, supremely dirty but highly good-humoured Hercules—"tear in with some of the bhoys at the one ind; and you"— to another enthusiast, with a week-old beard on a pock-marked face, and with bare ropey arms—"swing in your shpalpeens at the other; and we'll have a hivenly toime, bedad!"

These arrangements met with warm approval, and the contingents were promptly gathered. The very women and children took a delighted concern in the forthcoming exercises.

By some means, the population of the objective street got wind of the design, and made preparation accordingly.

Within half an hour, with almost explosive suddenness, there was kindled a full-blooded riot, with a hundred fights, a bombardment from windows, a smashing of heads and glass, and a fierce skirmishing which lasted for many hours, and was not completely suppressed until late at night, by which time the police-station was crowded with prisoners, and the infirmary with wounded belligerents and disabled constables.

Mike had the good luck which so often, if not always, attends the most harum-scarum of the human family and, by a strange irony, fails the most cold-bloodedly circumspect.

For, on his and Larry's appearance before the magistrates next morning, who should be there but two of the very Counsel whom he had seen on the occasion of the dinner at O'Flaherty Hall, and who had, only some days before, when they were in Court at Ballynoggin, subscribed to the present intended for him in connection with his gallant rescue of the Dutch brig.

They recognised him, laughed, asked him a question or two, and took up the defence *con amore*.

There are not ten men at the English Bar who could have made the impassioned, humorous, argumentative and utterly discursive speeches which they extemporised to the Bench. The result was—some small fines, which Larry paid out of his well-filled purse; whilst all the other leading combatants, who were in a condition to

appear at all, were either sent to prison right off, or heavily amerced, which came to the same thing.

Thoroughly exhilarated and refreshed by these experiences, Mike and Larry at length departed for Ballynoggin, where they arrived late at night, and drove straight to Baleila, as he and Larry were so bandaged and swathed in sticking-plaster that a daylight journey would have made them doubly conspicuous. Mike hated ostentation, and he rightly assumed that Larry had a soul above vulgar display.

It was Mike's fate to be always misunderstood. His purest motives, his gentlest deeds, his wisest designs, somehow or another, took on another aspect in the eyes of other people. The worst of it was that they generally convinced him that they were right, and left him only the reflection that everything was against him, and only the consolation of imprecating bad luck on things in general—for the time being.

Peter looked at him long and reproachfully, sighed, lifted his arms to high heaven with a gesture too deep for words, and then stole sadly away to his bedroom, to bury his head in the blankets and laugh until he had spasms.

Mary cried, and turned away from him, and Father O'Kay admonished him with severity.

"You go to meet him," he said, "to receive him on behalf of—of those charged with the sacred duty of shielding and sheltering him, as he lands, a stranger in a strange counthry. And how do you discharge your trust? How do you justify this confidence? Within three hours of setting eyes on him you're in the thick of a shindy, breaking shkulls—and the law—(bad cess to it! Lord, forgive me!) And within six hours you and he are locked up; and you pass the night in the police-station—(dhivil take it!)—and you're haled and arraigned

the next morning as malefacthors and rioters and vagabonds, and fined, bedad! (And, sure, there'll soon not be a bit of innocent enjoyment in this oppressed land, except for them that can afford it, and then, God help the poor!) Away with ye, Mike. It's an omadhoun you are, and there's no mending you, I fear, until, maybe, you get a thwack on the blundhering head of you that may dhrive the dhivil out and the sense in—and good luck to it, say I."

He went off impressively, furtively chuckling and rubbing his hands: and then Mike helped Larry to unpack, and, later, carried him off to see his dogs.

Larry

LARRY O'GRA had to be prepared for matriculation. Father O'Kay took him in hand, intending, later, to place him with some friends in Dublin. He hoped to start him at the ensuing term in Trinity College: the Humanities, to begin with, and then either Law or Science, according as the mental cat might jump. Medicine or Divinity were out of the question; and his father had said: "Anything but business. He will have enough to live on, and keep a family on, thank God! Let him have a noble education and live a higher life, and be a credit and a glory to the O'Gras."

These aspirations were duly impressed upon Larry. The glory of the O'Gras was an inspiring incentive which he appreciated at its worth, though he did not dwell much on it. He was at times strangely shy and bashful.

Father O'Kay would have hesitated to assume the task, slight as it was, in a sense; for his classics were rusty and his mathematics had never been much, and he had, in his busy, self-sacrificing life, been compelled to give up everything of an intellectual nature except an extremely limited and entirely cramping range of subjects. But his good friend, Father Blount of Kilmacartie, had very cheerfully come to his help. He had had a distinguished University career in Oxford, and, at one time, had been a curate in the Church of England. That was some fifteen or more years ago. He was an Irishman, and had been Parish Priest in Kilmacartie for several years.

It was later that those events occurred which, for a time, made his name so prominent and—in a certain connection—more than renowned. Some day that stirring tale may be told.

Father Blount rode over twice a week and set and heard lessons, and gave and examined papers; and Larry profited and progressed, and, almost unconsciously, formed himself after the model of that high-bred and well-mannered gentleman.

Larry had not an idle moment—for good or ill. He rode, fished, shot, poached, flirted, walked, sang, trained dogs and fighting cocks, played billiards in Ballynoggin, and had a hundred other busy non-occupations and distractions—with Mike as his inseparable companion, for the most part.

With all this he found time to follow up his graceful gift of a fine American organ to the Chapel at Baleila—on which he played exceedingly well, and sang, too—by starting the formation of a choir: and also the training and teaching an organist.

There was a fisher lad whose left leg and thigh had been smashed—a sweet-faced, large-eyed youngster with an innate love of music, a fine touch and remarkable aptitude. Him he taught assiduously, and imposed daily practice of many hours, so that, on his own departure for Dublin, he might be able to officiate and, as proficiency came, expand into more elaborate efforts and displays. The choir would grow with time and care; and he also worked at that—though spasmodically, of course.

Larry, with all his headlong impulsiveness, was not always lacking in thoughtfulness and tact. When the time was approaching for his departure to the Capital, he presented Father Blount also with a good harmonium—

entering into a pleasant little conspiracy with him that its arrival in the Chapel should be made a secret, and that he would play and sing at High Mass on the ensuing Sunday.

It necessitated much address and scheming to carry out the first portion of the understanding: but it was accomplished by the arrival of the instrument and a couple of men in a cart from Ballynoggin in the dead of a Saturday night, and with the connivance of Father Blount's servant and the constable only—both of whom vowed themselves to silence. A screen had been prepared and was fixed up, effectually masking the presence of the harmonium. The surprise was to be unalloyed.

On this Saturday afternoon Larry and Mike arrived at Kilmacartie — pacing down the long, triangular road through Ballynoggin, where they had happened to meet a few friends. A boy—old enough to be their father—had brought their collective hand-bag and left it with Mike's aunt—the saddler's widow—where they were to stay over night. Larry had, with a great show of plausible reasoning, declined Father Blount's invitation to stay with him. Besides, there was Mike. And there usually was some vivacity at O'Halloran's on Saturday nights.

Larry had only once before been in Kilmacartie and, as he was but driving through the place, he had been almost unremarked.

On the present occasion his appearance created some sensation, chiefly amongst the women and children of the township.

After a cup of tea at the aunt's, and a saunter about, with friendly recognitions and laughing reprobations right and left, Mike found himself in what was called the great kitchen at O'Halloran's, with Larry beside him. That the apartment had once been a kitchen was evident on all

sides; and a great round kettle still hung over the old-fashioned grate; a tall, Dutch-oven stood in a corner, and obsolete pots and pans and delf-ware on the high shelves. There was also a pump near the door, and a larder which was now used for empty bottles and baskets. The house had once been the residence of a big corn and cattle merchant. Now the front was occupied by O'Halloran's grocery, and the whole of the ground floor was devoted to business purposes—the family living in the ample rooms upstairs.

The kitchen—which could easily seat about thirty people—was the chief bar-parlour of the place for popular customers. O'Halloran had a little room on the half-landing for the higher class. The kitchen called it the House of Lords. The room called the other the House of Commons.

When Mike and Larry drifted into the kitchen, there were the usual salutations, and a little lull in the laughter and chaff and chatter, due to the curiosity and surprise excited by the presence of Larry.

This very soon wore away as the two young men lit their pipes and mixed their punch and glided into one or another of the surrounding streams of talk, or responded to some dominant note of assertion or joke.

Some of the men had been drinking for many hours, and all were more or less in a condition of unreasonable animation or dejection, and of diverse sensibility: prone to sudden rage, to easy laughter, to torrential eloquence, song, argument, wit, confidence, generosity, and, above and beyond all, pugnacity.

It happened that the subject of foreign cattle had been broached, as to which Larry had something to say, for he knew a good deal about it.

Now, it is known that not only did Larry naturally

speak with the genuine full-throated lip-wreathed local brogue, but, when excited by any cause or, as in the present instance, by a combination of causes, that charming distinctiveness of speech became richer and still more native. And what gave it even more piquancy—apart from the startling incongruity of the speaker's tongue and appearance — was that in idiom and pronunciation his language was finer and more purely redolent of the country-side than that of his hearers. For, whilst they, at home, had been subject to change—owing to influx of strangers, railways, and education—young O'Gra had learnt to speak from his father who had left Ireland nearly forty years ago.

Some of the Kilmacartians—there were some dozen or more present—listened with interest and wonderment: others talked, sang, wrangled, soliloquised or nodded. One of them—Jem Casey, the smith—became suddenly infuriated, gnashed his teeth, and asserted that the naygur was mocking and insulting his country by talking like an Irishman.

Nobody noticed him; but he was alive to duty and careless of fame, and he came round quietly, thinking probably that he was doing good by stealth, and, "toiling for fate," hit Larry, from behind, a mighty blow on the head with his stick.

Mike was laughing in another direction, and Larry went on talking as if quite ignorant of what had happened.

"He's hit you, sir, on the head," cried little Moran, the tailor, "Shame on you, Jem Casey! A cowardly blow, and a stranger, too."

There was some commotion. Larry looked puzzled. He had felt nothing.

"Why," went on Moran, wildly. "See, there's blood running down the side of your head——"

Larry felt, and then stared at the bloodstains on his fingers.

Instantly his face changed : he started to his feet.

" Who has done this ? Who has dared to touch me ? " cried he in a voice that terrified them.

Mike was at his side in an instant, and elderly little Moran—his head below Larry's shoulder—on the other flank, brave as fire.

The other men, intuitively perceiving a divergence of sentiment merging into a conflict, also rose and, without staying to parley or investigate, ranged themselves in a cluster some yards away.

" Hand over the coward who did this ! " again thundered Larry.

The reply was varied but incoherent. But it signified refusal, derision, defiance.

Before they could realise what had happened, Larry was amongst them, felling them in their crowded and surprised condition, right and left, whilst Mike and Moran, each with a bottle for weapon, dealt crashing blows with alacrity and effectiveness.

Larry happened up against a bench. He seized it, and holding it before him with his long strong arms, he forced his opponents before him, not even giving them the chance of striking back.

Within a very few minutes he, with his two helpers, had driven them into the old larder—the bottle and basket depository. They contrived to close the door and to hold it by sheer dead weight.

" Come out, you rascals," shouted Larry.

" Come out and be kilt, huroo ! " yelled Moran.

" Come now, don't be blushing so shy, behind the door," coaxed Mike.

" Stand clear," said Larry. " I'll soon have them out

of that, begorra!" and he laughingly pointed to his head.

"Oh, no need of that, Larry," answered Mike. "Sure, this will do as well—and comes cheaper."

He pointed to Larry's bench. The three of them took hold of it, after moving a table so as to give them more space; and, making a quick short run, dashed the end into the door, which gave way with a great noise. This, however, was as nothing to the shouts and howls from within. For some were hurt, and all astonished and alarmed.

"Sure, an' it's the dhivil himself," wailed some of them.

"Will you give up the coward who struck me?" again demanded Larry in imperious trumpet-like tones, "or shall I have to break every one of your heads?"

"What's this? What is the meaning of all this?"

They all turned to the sound of the sweet but commanding voice.

Kitty O'Halloran had entered the room, and now stood, splendidly erect and handsome, with white face but with blazing eyes.

Larry cast his eyes down and looked humbled and sorry. Mike and Moran showed no especial contrition.

In a few words the latter explained the situation.

"He's a lion, Miss Kitty, and a gentleman, and as good an Irishman as ever scattered his foes, in spite of his skin-deep beauty, bedad!" said Moran.

"Shame upon you!" said Kitty, in tones of concentrated anger and contempt, addressing the men in the larder. "A dozen of you—and he a stranger——"

They began to excuse themselves. She turned from them disdainfully.

"I am so sorry, so very sorry that this has happened," said Larry, with obvious sincerity and modesty. "It is all a misunderstanding—a mere trifle: probably my fault. I was very likely indiscreet: perhaps, I had no right to join in the conversation. Please, Miss O'Halloran, don't distress yourself about it."

"It's all right, Kitty," observed Mike, in a persuasive sort of way.

She, her face now flushed, seemed as if still listening to Larry.

Larry raised his head.

"Gentlemen," said he to the enemy behind the broken-down door, "if the—the gentleman who, under some mistaken idea that I meant anything wrong—and it was a mistake entirely—will come and say that he's sorry, I am ready to shake hands with him, and with you all: and we can sit down again and have a pleasant evening, like good friends."

"Ah, Kitty," whispered Mike. "That's your doing, now. D'ye think he'd lose this hivenly chance of breaking all their hids now, if it wasn't for you?"

Kitty laughed, and blushed.

There were cries and yells from the larder. Casey was dragged forward by a couple of men, and mumbled his apologies. Larry laughed cheerily as he shook hands with them all. Then he again begged Kitty to accept his excuses, and to trouble herself no further. She bade him good-night, prettily and unaffectedly, and retired—half envying the men who remained with him.

Larry invited them to resume their seats—a pail of water and a torn-up handkerchief or two having sufficed to patch up damages—and ordered in a supply of punch, porter and tobacco; and they were all very jovial—the little episode just past having had a sobering and

refining effect. They turned down the blotted folio and opened a fresh one.

"What a blessed bit o' luck that no clumsy hand or foot stepped on that!" remarked Hoggarty the barber, as he tenderly lifted a baize bag from a shelf and extricated a fiddle and bow.

There were loud expressions of approval and of anticipation.

Hoggarty tuned up, and then played one or two airs in the style of the village-fair performer. When he stopped, in order to drink again on the complimentary challenge of his auditors, Larry reached out his hand for the instrument, which its owner handed to him.

Some of the older fellows exchanged glances which plainly expressed the thought that this confident young man was, this time, about to venture very much beyond his depth. Some of the younger men whispered that, even if he could play, Hoggarty was hard to beat, and he'd find his master, bedad!

Larry examined the violin, tuned it, prepared the bow, talking about one thing or another all the time.

"Play them something grand and solemn, Larry," whispered Mike. "Don't be jigging or thrifling—now."

Larry smiled. The men looked at him.

He pushed his chair back and began. Almost at the first note they all pulled up sharply, as if electrified.

He played some sacred pieces which he thought they must know, and which, in any case, he felt sure that they would understand.

The sensation was intense. Most of the men were awe-struck, Mike was triumphant, Moran delighted and Hoggarty was frightened, when Larry paused.

"Oh, may the Mother of God and all the holy saints forgive me!" cried Hoggarty. "To think that I've had

that blessed and suffering fiddle all these years, and played haythen jigs, drinking songs, and all sorts of ongodly and profane nonsense on it, and me not knowing it was a holy fiddle all the toime! Oh, it's a base sinner I am!" and he smote his breast.

"You are that same, Pat Hoggarty," said two or three of his friends condolingly.

"And all the toime it was crowded with the swate and holy music: and it's just now been spaking in tears and complainings as if its heart was bruk: and it sighs and cries, and prays, like a soul long in prison standing at last by an open door and in the light of hiv'n. Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?" He wrung his hands.

Larry took up his bow, and after a short prelude, struck into a grand broad-phrased *Ora pro nobis*, his voice ringing through the room, the accompaniment tender and beautiful.

Tears stood in the eyes of Moran and Hoggarty: and the others crossed themselves.

Outside the door, with blanched face and trembling lip, and hands pressed to her tumultuous bosom, stood Kitty, listening—in a rapture of listening.

"Sir," said Hoggarty—when Larry was returning the violin, "you must kape it—you must indade, sir. God forbid that my desecrating fingers should ever touch that blessed ill-used insthrument again! But I didn't know—oh, I didn't know. How was I to tell of the beautiful sanctified heart it had all the whoile—the swateness and the prayers, the worship and the melody? And I to abuse it like a pagan as I have done! No—no sir, you must kape it."

"Well, Mr Hoggarty," said Larry, touched with the man's simple-minded sincerity, and too delicate to wound it. "But you must have another one, if I buy this of you——"

"Oh, not a thought of buying, sir; plaze, no," pleaded Hoggarty.

"Very well. But I must give you another one. How much would that be, now?"

"Well," said Hoggarty, "a good fiddle comes to a lot of money—a lot of money. This one, now—but we wont talk of that——"

"Come, Mr Hoggarty," laughed Larry. "You must help me a bit. I'm a stranger yet in my father's country, you know."

"Well, sir, this one cost me, with one thing and another, nigh on to thirty shillings."

"But you can't get one like it for that——"

"Oh yes—maybe, a little less."

"Now, look here, this is worth more than that—more than double that. I shall take your gift, and prize it. And you shall buy yourself a new one, and anything else you like—for it's five pounds I value this at, and five pounds you shall have."

Mike pressed his hand—openly.

Hoggarty was surprised and delighted—protesting and grateful. Everybody was more or less astonished and interested.

Mr O'Halloran, coming into the room discreetly after the shindy, Larry adjudged the occasion to demand replenishment of the glasses; and that large-minded young gentleman desired the former to bring in also five pounds and a pen and ink wherewith to fill up the blank cheque which he detached from its book.

This business was expeditiously despatched, and the money handed over to Hoggarty—most of the spectators being greatly puzzled to understand the operation.

"O'Halloran's no fool. What did he give him all that big money for?"

"Sorra o' me knows. Ax Mike there."

"Oh," answered Mike off-handedly. "He gave O'Halloran a cheque for it."

"A quwhat?"

"Oh, an order on the bank to pay him."

"Quwhat—that bit paper he wrote?"

"Yes."

"And will the bank pay bekase he writes and orders them to?"

"To be sure."

"It's what I said," exclaimed one of them. "It's the dhivil, he is, begorra!"

"Get away wid yez. Can the dhivil sing *Ora pro nobis?*"

And so the bewilderment and the speculation went on; and they drank briskly and the hour grew late.

By ones and twos they gradually dropped away and departed, until at last only Larry and Mike were left, with Casey fast asleep in a chair, and another man, whom Mike did not know, talking softly to himself and smiling a good deal in an abstracted way.

Larry hoped that Kitty would be visible once more.

Sure enough, she came in quietly, and was about to retreat when Mike brought her in to show her the breach in the fort.

She had heard the playing and the singing, she said. She shuddered and laughed when she saw the broken larder door and recalled the damaged besieged when they emerged on Larry's proclamation of amnesty and peace. And she once more waxed indignant when she recognised Casey in the sleeping man.

"The low mane thafe of him," she said, "for him to talk of complexions. Why," she turned to the two young men with sparkling eyes, as one suddenly inspired. "Why,

it would serve him right"—she lowered her voice—"if his face and hands was to be made really black, and him put like that into his house, and roaring Moll Casey to see him in the morning—for it's asleep the woman is now—and he not knowing a mortal thing about it."

"Kitty," exclaimed Mike, slapping his knee, "you're a pretty little dhivil and had ought to be a man, bedad!"

She heard him, but her glowing eyes were fixed on Larry.

"Yes," laughed he, "Mike is right. Miss O'Halloran, you're—an angel," added he, enthusiastically.

"Get him away," she whispered, with a motion of her head towards the man who kept on addressing the toes of his boots in an endless monotone, and smiling to himself in a secretive way.

"Who is he at all, at all? I misremember seeing him before."

"Faith! Mike, and it's meself is ignorant. I've seen him about: he looks like an old sojer."

"Well," answered Mike, "we'll just be afther shifting him out of this, and he maybe will wander to where he does be belonging—and small matter if he don't."

He and Larry approached the quiet rhetorician.

"Seems to me," said Larry, "that the man's had a sunstroke: I've seen such cases—and a little drink——"

"Sunstroke!" cried Mike, "sure an' he looks that it would take all that to get anything bright into the hid of him, anyway, though it's all moonshine he's for iver an' iver repating. Hear to him, now."

They listened.

"——for it stands to rayson," the man was saying in a quiet, grave, scholastic voice, "because, you see, it was not the same level on every side, and in consequence it happened just that way, being too straight on the east

and so slanting the other way on the west; for it stands to rayson, because——" the same rigmarole over and over again.

They took him each by an arm, and he, without alacrity but also without resistance or difficulty, walked out with them into the dark night, still discoursing. They conducted him a hundred yards or so down the silent, unlighted, informal street—or, rather, irregular sort of square which, with some breaks and alleys formed the township—every house being, for the most part, built at the angle which seemed good to the builder: so that fronts, sides, and backs looked at each other in a scattered area, and streets seemed to begin, or to end, in an inconsequential and inconsecutive manner.

They left him arguing out with himself some other thesis—all in that equable tone, and with every indication that he not only convinced himself, but also extracted pleasure by the sparks of argument and wit which illumined his addresses.

They propped him against a wall and left him enunciating that it stands to reason, because, don't you see, the papers said that no time was lost, and that was why people often don't find time to do things, because it stands to reason—and so on, until some other physical jolt should change the subject.

On their return to the kitchen, Kitty was not to be seen, but a great basin, full of some very dark mixture, stood meaningly beside Jem Casey's sleeping head, and a piece of sponge alongside explained its function and almost urged its aid.

Not that any special persuasion was at all necessary.

"Blacking," said Mike, "all ready, too. Isn't she a darlint, now, Larry?"

"A darling, a darling — a sweet, beautiful, clever

darling—the darlingest darling in all the big wide world —sweet Kitty O'Halloran!" said Larry—or rather, sang he, ecstatically.

And, for once, a listener heard something very pleasant about herself.

They took Casey anatomically and thoroughly in hand. There was not the space of a dot which was left unblacked from the crown of his bullet-head to well down his bull neck. His hands and arms were equally treated.

Larry, who was no mean artist, added a few touches of realism in the broad white lines underneath the eyes and around the mouth.

They stepped back to gather in the full effect of the disguisement, and were well pleased.

"Oh, if Kitty could only see him now," sighed Mike.

"Loosen his boots, and take them off when you put him—very quietly—into his house," said Kitty's voice in a loud whisper from somewhere. They could not see her.

She declined the entreaty to show herself.

"And," continued she, "take him out by the side door. I've opened it. It's just along the lane at the back where his smithy is, and he lives beside it. You'll find the door open. Don't come back. Good night, Mike. Good night—to—to both of you."

They followed her directions, and as they passed through the side-door, the smith held up between them, they heard a low musical laugh, and knew that Kitty was watching them, and enjoying the fun.

"Ah, Kitty, you pretty little dhivil," repeated Mike.

"Ah, Kitty you—you angel!" said Larry softly.

"Good night, Kitty."

"Good night, Mike."

"Good night, Miss O'Hal—good night, Kitty."

"Good night, L—Larry;—Sir, I mane."

They lifted the latch of Jem Casey's cottage, whereupon a combination of odours, which seemed to have conspired together for aggression, rushed at them and nearly upset them. The onslaught was supported by a thunderous sound—the gentle accompaniment to Mrs Casey's balmy slumber.

They noiselessly inserted him into his little house, placed his boots behind the door, took off his coat and loosened his cravet-less and collar-less neckband, and took an informal leave of him, as he—by some instinct feeling himself at home—tiptoed his way towards his lady's snore.

They walked demurely to their quarters, but deflected their course for a voice which they seemed to recognise and to which they gravitated.

"For it stands to rayson," the voice was saying, in a calm, dogmatic tone, "because, don't you see, when a man's made up his mind, what's he to do? He's nothing left to go on with, barring it's like a coat and he can turn it and have it made up on the other side. There's no help for it. If a man will make up his mind he must turn his coat. It stands to rayson, because——" and so forth again.

They could get nothing from him as to who he was, or where he lived, or whom he knew.

"Larry," said Mike, in his friend's ear, "I remember now. This is the man I bruk my bottle over the head of. Sure, an' it's all clare to me now. I've mhoidered him a bit, I'm afther thinking. Here's what we'll do. Round here is Jerry Macnamara's stable—where many's the toime I've put up. I know the trick of the door—none better. We'll get him in there. I'll shake down a whisp o' clane straw. He'll slape, or talk, or smile—or all the lot together at the same time—dhivil a bit it matters which—and I'll put him undher the pump in the morning."

So said, so done: and at length, the two of them laid

their busy careless heads on their pillows and went instantaneously to sleep—Mike to dream of fights and dogs and dodgeries; and Larry to dream of Kitty.

The next morning opened on as fair a Sunday as any that ever smiled in the West of Ireland, and the two young fellows were astir in good time. Larry had to make a careful toilet, for Father Blount was to call upon him for an early visit to the Chapel, with some music that the former had brought, and to try the harmonium and make various arrangements for the High Mass.

He was also to breakfast with the priest.

Mike went to look up the strange man.

He found him sitting on an inverted pail, in front of the stable, a horse-cloth over his shoulders, and a straw in his hand.

"It stands to rayson," he was saying, in the same low, confidential tone of voice, "because, don't you see, a man may forget himself but he can't very easily mislay himself. I say very easily, for some things are hard to explain. This straw, now; it will tell you the way the wind blows, and a Christian can't do it, barring he's been to say, or been larnt it; for it stands to rayson, because——"

"Oh, cóme out of that," said Mike roughly but not unkindly, because the bottle incident was a natural link of friendliness between them: then he tried to get some information from him. In this he again failed; so he pushed him off the pail, filled it with water, found the stable sponge, and, making the man get on his knees, he bathed his head and neck vigorously and perseveringly for a long time.

The method was simple but effective.

When he helped the subject on to his feet, he—the subject—shook himself, rubbed his damp brow, laughed loudly, and said:

"It stands to rayson. If I'm Donovan, what am I doing in Macnamara's stable? And if I'm Macnamara, what do I be throubling the head of me about Donovan's affairs? Now, it stands to——"

"Are you Donovan—Jim Donovan's brother?" asked Mike.

"Yes, sir," was the smart reply.

"Now," said Mike, cleverly. "Attention! Right turn! Quick march!"

The man went off briskly and erect—laughing to himself as he said something of which Mike caught only the words:

"And so, the wind may blow all the straws to smithereens, and the dhivil may fly away with Macnamara! For it's Donovan I am, all the time. Donovan, aboo!"

He had barely turned the corner of an adjacent shed when Mike heard loud screams and shouts.

He was, naturally, about to rush forward and ascertain the cause of the startling sounds, when the cries of "the naygur, the naygur," caused him to retreat quickly into the stable, whence he could look out with safety.

The uproar increased, and in a minute or two, a wild figure rushed past, chased by half-dressed men, women, and children.

Mike recognised Jem Casey, black of face, frightful of eyes and mouth, without hat, coat, or boots.

"It will be the tearing fun in a few minutes from this," said Mike to himself—"but it would be murdher, dhivil a turn less, if I show myself just now."

So he lay low.

Presently, he heard yells and howls of a highly exhilarating nature, and peeped out. Casey had been caught—the capture having cost all parties dearly, to judge from appearances.

"For the love of hiv'n give me a dhrink o' wather," begged Casey. "I'm fit to dhrop."

He had apparently seen the pail, which Mike had left standing.

Somebody brought him a drink.

"Let me sit down a minit."

The pail was once more inverted and he sat down.

"Oh, may all the saints above have pity on me!" he sighed. "If I am Jem Casey, then it's a judgment has been sent on me for mocking that naygur as isn't a naygur at all, last night. And if I'm not Jem Casey then—then—I've been afther making mighty free wid his house and his—his belongings. Oh lor, oh lor, oh lor!"

Just then Father Blount and Larry came along, in spick-span sedateness.

"What's all this? what's all this? Haven't you had time to sleep off your dirty debauch, but you must shame the very sun on this Sunday morning?" said the priest, severely.

Larry looked as innocent and ignorant as a battered old barrister converted into a new judge.

Mike came out, said a word or two, which caused a general laugh; then the helpless Casey was locked into the stable and the rest went through the short alley into the "place"—the street, square, or whatever it was, that really formed Kilmacartie—the site of its market, cross, well, chapel, and the few places of business that it possessed.

There sat and moaned Mrs Casey—her superabundant figure picturesquely but sparsely clad—and with her all the matrons of the township, condoling loudly: and all the spinsters apart, whispering and tittering; and all the children wondering, shouting, crying; and all the men

who had not joined in the pursuit, talking, gesticulating, swearing, vowing vengeance and breathing slow torture.

It was a din of voices, lamentations, tears, oaths, comfortings, threatenings, low laughs;—the women all sympathetic, from different standpoints; the men all furious, ferocious, from one only.

"Go you on to the chapel, you two," Father Blount had said to Mike and Larry before they emerged on the public place: and the young men made their way round, and entered the Chapel unseen, by the priests' door.

The moment Father Blount showed himself the clamour broke out with redoubled volume. He listened without a word. Then he raised his hand for silence.

"Bring him forward."

In a few minutes Jem Casey was led up, looking very dismal and abject.

Terrific howls met him: there were cries for summary execution.

"Somebody, bring a bucket of hot water and some soap."

"Och, it's a miracle the holy man's afther going to commit," went the round.

"Now, one of you women——"

"Sure, your Reverence, you would'nt expect us to touch him—now——" expostulated some of the women, laughing or aghast, according to their respective humour.

"No, no. One of the men will do. Now, take this soap, lather him well, and scrub him manfully."

They crowded round to see the process—to many a novel one.

"Now, Mistress Casey, what do you say now? Is your mind the easier? Though it does you credit to be so sensitive, and long may you all continue to prize your honour, which is your glory, too."

But few heard this little homily, for as Casey grew distinct under the scouring, his wife seized him, dealt him several crashing blows, and chased him home—he speeding like a hare, and she following like a steam-roller, screaming that he had shamed her, the villin—and deceived her, besides. Shrieks of laughter, gibes, jeers and jokes, resounded on all sides: songs were started, and cheers for the priest.

From the windows of the houses around came also laughter and witty interchange of remarks with those below—and Kitty was of the most delighted, as well as delightful there. She saw everything—but made no other observation.

Then once more Father Blount raised his hand, and, instantly, silence followed.

"Come, all of you. The bell will be going soon for High Mass. I shall expect you all—all of you: and this day you will be especially glad you've come."

He went on his way chapelward, leaving his people to wonder at his meaning.

Kitty was not the only worshipper in the crowded chapel who looked round for Larry. Mike was there —but where was Larry? They all remarked the screen but suspected nothing.

They were soon to know.

After the Introit there was a pause.

Before anyone could begin to think why, a sound came along—as of the distant sea when the far-away ebb begins to turn; then, as of sighing winds gathering strength in the tree-tops, then as a voice—a cry, an appeal followed by rolling thunder, as if the storm-clouds hailed the roaring surfs; then, as if light broke through and heavenly voices sang together, came beautiful melodies, soft and sweet, and grand harmonies as if drums were beating and

banners rattling in the quick hearts and ears of the hearers: melting, changing, rising to entreaty, praise, triumph, joy.

The men sat with pale or flushing faces, and the women with clasped hands, red and pale in swift alternation: the children, wide-eyed, wondering, half-frightened and delighted. Kitty was "breathless with adoration"—and with a new delicious ache at her heart, for she intuitively perceived why Larry was not visible.

Later in the service the screen—of silk, on a short, brass rail hinged to the wall—was folded back, and Larry stood up, beside the now disclosed instrument, and sang the Benedictus, the Credo, and a hymn, and then after one sweep of his fine dark eyes—Kitty noticed that they lit up as they encountered her's, and that a smile for a brief fraction of an instant hovered on his face—he closed them until he had finished.

Beautifully he sang, the Chapel just suiting his voice: and he looked striking and well—his tall figure in the white cassock, and the light shining on the smooth wavelets of his hair.

Father Blount in his address made grateful allusion to Larry and his generous offering; and to his fine gifts of voice and hand. He announced that the young gentleman, who had come from across the far seas to the land of his fathers, and had shown them that in heart and worship distance had no power to separate, intended to add to the obligation under which he had already laid them, by starting a choir, for which purpose all the boys were to assemble in the afternoon and be tried for their fitness. As to an organist—well, that will not be forgotten: and God be thanked for every good and kind thing that He puts it into the heart of anyone to do for His glory and service as well as for help to men!

A spirited voluntary was designed to play the people out—but no one moved. At last, they all stood about outside, as if with one accord to see Larry come out.

When he did so, every hat went off, the women curtseyed, and children timidly touched him. He exchanged smiles and greetings with those he knew, making Hoggarty and Moran feel like princes at being accosted as "Mister Hoggarty" and "Mister Moran"—the only men there whom he so distinguished.

Kitty was proud and radiant, withdrawing herself unobtrusively behind her mother's ample flank.

Irish vivacity must rebound from seriousness or tension of any kind.

"Quwhat do ye say now, roaring Moll Casey?" cried a bantering voice. There was a storm of laughter.

"Och! thin, an' it's sorry she is——" somebody answered quickly; but other cries interrupted.

"Troth, she wouldn't have——"

"Maybe——"

"Ah, thin, lave her alone. It's pitying her you should——"

"Hush—here comes his Reverence," and there was quiet—for half a minute.

"Come again, sorr; come to us again, and sing and play, if ye plaze, sorr," said Moran earnestly. "Sure, you've made the dear chapel alive with colour, sorr, from this out," which was a fine thought touching the prismatic suggestiveness or effect of music.

"Aye," cried a cheery-faced but toothless old woman, "Lord bless your noble face! Sure, it's like a grand sunrise it is, wid yer eyes, an' yer voice, an' the soft silver spache of ye. Swate Kitty O'Halloran, bid him come again to us! We're poor folk, but we know them we love—and he'll come if you axe him, darlint."

All the women concurred unfalteringly. Some instinct, not apprehended of men, must instruct them.

Now, had Kitty been an English—or conventional—maiden, she would have been exceedingly embarrassed.

But, whilst her colour took on a deeper tone and her eyes a brighter light, she remained unaffectedly natural, quick-witted, and charmingly tactful.

With a smile, and without any hesitation, she approached and dropped him a pretty curtsey.

"Please, will you come soon and sing and play to us again, Mr Larry? Indade, we shall be so thankful and glad if you will, now," said she persuasively.

From the moment she began to speak he uncovered his head, with the grace and dignity of a hidalgo, and remained so uncovered. He promised, with a smile, and he was thanked with a rousing cheer.

"Ah!" mused Mike, who kept an observant eye on everything, as he was arranging with a man he knew concerning some furtive netting.

"Ah, O'Halloran, rich man as you are, by all accounts, it's the mighty good luck that's coming to you, for it's a piebald father-in-law ye'll be, before you're done, or I'll swallow the dear pair of 'em—bedad! More pow'r to 'em! Larry aboo, aboo!"

In Wax

Mottleboy's Waxworks—less briefly designated by him The Royal and Universal Galleries of History and Galaxy of Fame—was working down the West of Ireland.

The disturbed condition of that part of the country developed a cheerfulness amongst the inhabitants which predisposed them to additional diversions. It was, too, but natural that the unrest begotten by frequent demonstrations, meetings, eviction scenes, and other manifestations, should crave for variety, Besides, distress deserves an occasional treat; and ruin is apt to be spendthrift. Political excitement, irregular combinations, and agrarian unpleasantnesses were always with them; but Waxworks and Circuses were rare.

Mottleboy was a good man of business, and he was doing well. It is true that the prices of admission were reduced, but then fodder and living were cheap, casual labour cost him next to nothing, and other expenses were also less.

Much of his present prosperity was due to his son, Joe. That young man was a fairly good modeller, and had a quick dramatic and commercial instinct, with much tact, originality and enterprise; and, although an Englishman, he had the further advantage of a head which was proof to almost any unreasonable quantity of whisky. He acted also as the advance agent.

When Joe arrived at Ballynoggin he found that town in a state of violent ebullition and delight. Lawyer Kennada had just returned from London and Dublin with the

Governmental consent to grant a large sum for the construction of drydocks (which were not wanted) at a point (which was conspicuously unsuitable), and on easy terms of repayment as to a portion of the amount (which it was no man's, woman's, or child's notion to observe, even to the extent of the nominal interest).

This brilliant success—for it was, in effect, all found money, to be spent in the town—at once made Kennada a hero, a benefactor, and a patriot of a practical type. The local papers rang with his praises, and Ballynoggin set about the organising of a public holiday, a torch-light serenade, and a banquet. An emergency meeting of the Town Council forthwith changed the name of a recently re-christened street from Lefevre Row to Kennada Avenue.

Joe saw his opportunity. The great man consented to have his portrait figure added to the Galaxy of Fame, and gave him the requisite sittings. He was also induced to transfer to him some of his easily-recognisable and characteristic articles of apparel, for Joe had explained that it was the invariable rule of the establishment to make its own subjects and to pay for all its objects. Mr Kennada thought it a sensible rule, and duly receipted the bill, which Joe—who knew what he was about, though the other did not think so—made a liberal one.

Sensational posters, advertisements, and newspaper articles prepared the world of Ballynoggin and the surrounding townships and villages for the appearance of the Waxworks and its latest illustrious addition—for the accommodation of whose head that of Isaac Butt had been temporarily taken off.

Mottleboy's entry into Ballynoggin was magnificent beyond any precedent.

On a special car, in a splendour of new paint, gilding

and bunting, was exposed a group representing Lawyer Kennada, before whom knelt the emblematic figure of Ballynoggin (she was Joan of Arc in ordinary waxwork life) supporting a cornucopia, whilst Erin with a harp (Sappho in cirenean reality, though sometimes performing as Apollo by the simple substitution of a more succinct petticoat and a curly wig) held a laurel crown over his head.

Half a dozen Societies, Leagues, and Brotherhoods had gone with their bands to meet the Galaxy, and the imposing procession into and through the town kindled unbounded enthusiasm and thirst.

And, indeed, it was not to be wondered at. Not only was Kennada's likeness a good one—with the strong mouth, blank gable of upper lip, abrupt islet of nose, sunken eyes, precipitous brows, and wild black hair—but the accessories were perfect enough to convince an ophthalmic hospital at long range. For who else in the entire county had a head and hat so big, or lived behind a five-barred waistcoat, as if in perpetual custody to himself? Or who could mistake that straining coat which was eighteen inches scant of width for his ample chest, or those lower-storey habits with the conscientious detail of the hiatus to the tops of boots as phenomenal as his hat?

Mottleboy's pitch was in the centre of the town, and the public-spirited Council remitted the usual fees and rents. He, of course, dined the Municipal Body in the aggregate, and drank them unremittingly and informally in, and to, their individual capacity—that is, most of them.

The versatile Joe had too good a sense of expediency and proportion to let one feature of the show be neutralised by another. He had promptly locked away the old catalogues and set himself to adapt the Galaxy to the tastes of the places through which it passed. Local colour was an easy matter; and everybody knows that in a historical

collection, even when it displays contemporaneous celebrities, a correct resemblance is not so much a consideration as a correct label.

The Royal Family had to be suppressed, naturally. A few touches evolved Daniel O'Connel out of what had been Norman Macleod in Scotland and Sir William Harcourt in England. With a change of drapery and some minor properties, Garibaldi was transformed into Malachi of the Golden Collar, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson into St Patrick. To convert Voltaire into Grattan and Lord John Russell into Shiel was but to change the ticket; and Pigott in the act of forging his confession of forgery was a transition from Darwin that required the nomenclature only; and so on of many other changes, mostly of an antithetical nature.

But Joe was equal to the nice discrimination which was necessary to marshal the political notabilities of the moment, according to their popularity or unpopularity which, he was aware, were varying and interchangeable terms. He not only secured a fair average balance but even a redundancy of favour: the happy mean leant heavily to the right side.

When the Mottleboys eventually left the town, after a stay of so many weeks as they had, originally, contemplated days, it was in a whirl of glory and friendliness—their cattle sleek, their staff full of liquor, and their funds very substantially augmented.

After a few trifling pitches and some long journeyings the caravan found itself at a halt some miles from Knockmabouchal, and Joe rode forward to make the necessary arrangements for site, publicity, patronage, and the usual work of an alert advance agent.

He soon found that he had ridden far out of the radius and reach of the Kennada worship, and, as if into another

world, entered a region of bitter and baffled hostility to him and to everything appertaining to Ballynoggin.

For years Knockmabouchal had vainly sought to obtain Government approval — which meant all the necessary capital—of its wishes and plans for the creation of a harbour, for which its natural advantages were certainly equal to those of the other town. It was now in a ferment of discontent, and its feelings of exasperated disappointment were fittingly expressed by its small but vigorous journals, and by uncontrollable meetings which passed steep-adjectived resolutions of remonstrance and wrath.

As is ever the case, the crisis produced the man—Lawyer O'Toole came to the front. He announced himself ready to oppose that supine idiot or double-dyed traitor, their member; and even to go to London, at his own expense, to expose the criminal devices and deceptions which had frustrated the legitimate aspirations of his town, and so fatuously and corruptly acceded to those of Ballynoggin.

As to Lawyer Kennada, the mere mention of his name provoked explosions of almost speechless rage. New words of contumely had to be coined, new curses had to be combined, new similes of deadly insult had to be invented for him. There was not a circumstance of his life, nor any fact or fiction affecting his family for some generations back, but it was exhumed, exaggerated, blackened, derided, gloated over, and held to prove how much he was below the moral level of the lowest helot of the most degraded camp-follower in all the hosts of Satan.

Joe whistled softly when he learnt the state of public feeling and opinion, as they were told him over a glass or two, or three—or, maybe, a dozen or so—with wonderful unanimity and fire.

He became sure of two things:—that if Kennada were

exhibited the Galaxy would be wrecked, and that if O'Toole were put in his place there would be a furore of pleasure and sixpences.

That same evening he had arranged everything satisfactorily—even to the clothes and mould of the face of the champion who had stood up so stoutly for the rights, and, what still more conduced to support and renown, the wrongs of Knockmabouchal.

The other needful preliminaries were seen to with a completeness due to the experiences in the other town; and when the bands and banners marched out to meet the procession, they turned and escorted back into the market place, at the end of the long line of gorgeous and other vehicles, the self-same car on which now stood the O'Toole in a noble attitude—the figure, and even the wax of the countenance, having been Kennada's.

Nothing had been omitted to cast into the group the tragic enunciation of Knockmabouchal's defiance, disdain, and a distress just stopped-short of despair.

Behind the stalwart champion hovered Erin (late Charlotte Corday) with a green sash and streaming hair, her eyes raised upwards in upbraiding appeal, and Sappho's lute in her hand with the strings significantly relaxed; whilst at his feet was a cherub holding on to a large anchor, wreathed with shamrocks and ivy, to body forth the deathless sentiment of Hope.

The chubby little fellow was actually Cupid, requisitioned from the side of Venus, who, in a snowy shell, an emerald frock, and a star on her brow, for the time being symbolised Young Ireland, the new Gem of the Sea.

The local papers were jubilant, poetic and deeply aggravating. The deposition of Kennada and the presentment of O'Toole were such salve to the editors' hearts that they rubbed it in in language designedly

calculated to raise the blood of Ballynoggin to fervent heat.

This was all right for the Mottleboys. They were not likely to be that way again for years, if ever. What though "the grass never grows where once the hoof of the Osmanli's charger has trod";—the meadow was green and the herb succulent during the sojourn. The money came in merrily, and that was good enough—whilst it lasted.

But their complacency, as might, indeed, have been divined from the very fulness of its measure, was nearing its end. It was as the ominous calm of the tightened river just before it bends over the edge of the cataract. Man, by some ordinance or sport of fate, is often thus lulled and lapped in moods of pleasant content, and dreams of remoteness of peril, and seeming assurance of fixedness of serenity, so that the impending bolt from the blue shall strike him before he can stretch out to take in a reef or even handle a sheet.

Mr Mottleboy and his son were at breakfast one morning in excellent humour, felicitating themselves on having struck a fine vein of human vanity and popular folly, and discussing developments.

"Yes, Joe," his father was saying, "that 'its 'em. Tell you what it is. There ain't no bully politicians has 'arf our hart and knowingness in gauging to a nicety the strenth and lenth of a person's popularity, whether it's a general or a horator, or a murderer, or a nero. As to the public—ho! ho! ho!—the public!"

"No doubt," said Joe quietly. "Idols are conceited, and idolaters are fickle. That's true enough."

Just then a visitor walked in and served Mottleboy with a writ at the suit of Kennada, who claimed £10,000 damages for libel and slander, and as *solatium* for the

suppression, removal, destruction or otherwise of his portrait figure, and for the non-continued exhibition thereof.

They had scarcely time to realise this extraordinary demand, before another myrmidon from Ballynoggin arrived to serve upon him an office copy of an Order of Injunction, obtained *ex parte*, to restrain him from ceasing to exhibit Kennada.

And when they were leaving O'Toole's office, after a short consultation, the Sheriff met them and gave Mottleboy written notice that he had been "ruled" to prevent the removal of the caravan, as he was an undomiciled foreigner, unless he first gave security to the satisfaction of the Court.

Kennada was obviously a man of energy. O'Toole was ecstatic for personal, professional and patriotic reasons. The Mottleboys were dazed and stupefied.

Never had such an action been heard of. People had objected to be exhibited; but to claim heavy damages for *not* being exhibited was astounding, out of Ireland, as Joe said.

"Joe," said Mottleboy, later, "look 'ere. I ain't going to give no bully security; and I ain't going to commit no contemp' of court for not keeping on shewing that bounder, which I wouldn't do even if I 'ad 'im; and I ain't going for to worry and ruin myself in law, neither; no, nor yet play their game, nor shew no white feather. Tell you what we'll do. You cut across 'ome with the money—there's over fourteen hundred and sixty (I'll keep the hodd sixty)—and 'and it over to mother. She'll know what to do with it. It's *her* business, you know, and we're only her lessees—see?—though we're not going to let that out here, at present."

Joe looked doubtful.

"It's all right, Joe," said his father. "Why, wasn't there the Will and the probate and the legacy to her—as I was getting into Queer Street? You needn't smile like that, Joe. She weren't no effigy as made that Will, but your own arnt who'd been dying for years in my 'ouse. The Will was as real as the money, and I can hanswer for that, for I found every penny of it. Very well. You do that. I'll sell the 'osses, discharge the 'ands, lay the Galaxy up in lavender, and take it heasy. That's the halgebra, my son. Maybe I'll think of some ways to keep things lively and profitable. Anyways, we'll 'ave things safe."

He rose to the occasion, and, his indignant surprise over, he was now savagely cheerful.

Joe concurred with him.

Within an hour the horses were sold and the money received.

"That's all right," said he. "There was nothing said about selling, and the Sheriff would 'ave 'ad to feed 'em. And we're entitled to live, you know, especially as they stop the Show and call us foreigners. Now, what are you a-rumblimating of, Joe?"

"Well, father," answered he, "what with the state of feeling here against Kennada, and as this is all his doing, it seems to me that we should turn it to account. Nothing goes down in Ireland like being martyrs, you know, right or wrong."

"That's so, Joe, that's so. Rum lot. Full of sentiment and fury; and the one is always a-running into the other. But, what's the idear?"

"Why," said Joe, "bill the town and tell what's happened. Get the mayor to call an Indignation Meeting: they're always good for that. Hoist a black flag, play the Dead March, get black calico and cover up all the figures

in mourning. Then, keep the band together, and give concerts. Concerts, mind, not shows. Run the thing for all it's worth. I shall be back in three or four days, and perhaps bring some gymnasts, conjurors, freaks or what not. We can then move about while leaving the Galaxy here. We can always get a hall, a barn, or a big room almost anywhere."

"Good boy," said his father admiringly.

"Father," went on Joe, with increasing animation, "we're going to boom this calamity. It's the best advertisement we ever had. That Ballynoggin affair is a political job, and we'll get ourselves tacked on to the discussions and fightings:—perhaps, we may even get ourselves mentioned in Parliament. Why, by George! we might have played up for it."

"Yes, Joe," replied his father, beamingly, "I see it, I see it now. What an 'ed you have."

"Besides," resumed Joe, "we haven't lost yet. We may win, though this is Ireland, and perhaps—who knows—get costs, and all the advantage of the publicity thrown in. And look here, father, don't pay the band. Tell them that law proceedings have broken you up. I'll lend them money up to their wages. They'll owe that to me, and the wages you'll owe to them. So they can hold on to their instruments, whatever happens."

"Right, Joe, right," nodded Mottleboy.

"Keep a sharp look-out for O'Toole," pursued Joe, "Kennada is only making big mouths at us, but O'Toole, being here, will swallow us bit by bit if he has half a chance. Keep him dark, and short by the head, and never write any mortal thing for him, not even your name to an affidavit, while I'm away."

So they quietly took in sail and altered their course in a cool and business-like way.

In Wax

Knockmabouchal was stirred to its depths by the tale of odious persecution and audacious rapacity and, to a man, took ardent sides with Mottleboy.

There were demonstrations and meetings. The Mayor gave a *conversazione* in the Galaxy Marquee which netted over £30. This was followed by a Benefit for Mottleboy, at which many fervid orators declaimed to a packed, and paying, audience; and that was succeeded by instrumental concerts by the band. There were also collections for the Defence; and if any were at first disinclined to contribute they, with sickly smiles, changed their minds as they glanced at the resolute faces of the collectors.

Needless to say, the papers took up the Cause in eloquent torrents of ink.

Once call anything a Cause, and you raise it to a high plane of dignity and financial potentiality.

When Joe returned, some seven or eight days later—for his father had written to him not to hurry as he was doing remarkably well on the indignant and sympathetic racket—he found that they had had the best week on record: over £90 clear, after paying even the exceptional outgoings. This was, of course, quite apart from the Defence Fund.

Joe had got a good little company together and made up an attractive programme. They ran the business in its new grooves, leaving the caravan, figures, and properties in the technical custody of the Sheriff.

Mr O'Toole was sad and furious at Mottleboy's refusal to sanction steps to dissolve the injunction, or to reclaim against the tyrannical order for the seizure of the Galaxy, or to move that the trial of the action be set down for Dublin and not at Ballynoggin, which Kennada had shrewdly done on the ground, *inter alia*, that it would be inequitable and ruinous to take his numerous witnesses to

the Capital. Mottleboy persisted in remaining simply on his defence.

Mr O'Toole pointed out forcibly that even an Irish Court, and notwithstanding that he was English, might have some regard to the prayer that he would probably not have a fair trial at Ballynoggin; but in vain. Never had he so low an opinion of an Englishman's cheery callousness and Dutch-like phlegm.

In due course the Assize came to Ballynoggin, and the trial came on. Each side had a good array of Counsel (who are not dear) every man of whom was as full of points as a circular saw, and bursting, in swirling eddies, with fluent and florid rhetoric—argumentative, sarcastic, passionate, humorous, persuasive, denunciatory, declamatory.

The case occupied nearly a week, what with Counsels' addresses, witnesses, and wranglings over misquoted precedents.

It were instructive, but interminable, to describe that great series of skirmishes and pitched battles. Some of the learned Judge's observations in the summing-up may, however, be usefully given.

It is indisputable that, in Ireland, the Judges are, with accidental exceptions, selected because of their ugliness—facial, chiefly.

Mr Justice Cartophle, who presided over this case of Kennada *v.* Mottleboy, was destined, even to the most superficial eye, to yet higher judicial honours. His impressive face was strongly marked—the upper line being all shaggy eyebrow, and the lower all fearsome mouth, both parallels being driven from ear to ear. It was myrrh and frankincense to him when an English suitor was before him, for that gave him the chance of playing up cheaply against the unpopularity which he had too industriously

earned as a Castle official, before his elevation to the Bench which adorned him.

"Now, gentlemen," he said in the course of his address to the Jury, speaking in a deep voice and with a mellifluous brogue, and looking fiercely at the defendant from time to time, "the facts are all before you, and those facts are not denied. Whatever else the defendant—this English adventurer, or showman, or charlatan, or vagabond, or clown, or whatever he calls himself, who had the effrontery to come to Ireland, to this poverty-stricken isle of ours, to take money out of the pockets of her people—*out* of their pockets, mind you—whatever else he may say or not say, allege or keep back, he has not had the courage, or the skill, to deny those facts. He could not, as his pleas were drawn; he dared not, as the evidence shows. Courage, gentlemen, is of two kinds, moral and animal. Moral courage is the result of high moral qualities. Animal courage is the courage of an animal. Englishmen are supposed, I say supposed, to possess some portion of the latter—occasionally. That compliment I cannot pay to the defendant. Gentlemen, he has not denied the facts, and you will say whether such contemptible poltroonery is the impertinence of a good cause, or the over-confidence of a bad one. Perhaps, he was well advised. Perhaps, he saw in the abject cowardice of non-denial, right or wrong, some possibility of extorting your pity, even though he forfeited your respect. I do not know. I decline to let down my mind to fathom the noisome shallows of his. Enough that he has *not* denied the facts: and they stand out in relief, as if in letters of fire graven in the rock; as ineffaceable, irrevocable, immutable, as are the echoes of Irish scenes in exiled hearts, as are the memories of unforgiven wrongs."

There was considerable emotion as these periods were

delivered with grand elocutionary effect and a rhythm all the finer for the brogue. Nobody quite knew what they meant, but that was no matter.

"Well then," he proceeded, "there is the question of law, which it is for me to decide and for you to follow, with unbiassed minds. The learned—and almost unfortunate—Counsel for this defendant had the assurance, the temerity—the audacity I was going to say, but I shall not—to urge that there was no case for the Jury—no case to go to the Jury. No case? Gentlemen, no case? I do not wonder at the smile which suffuses the Court. No case? But while I sit here to administer justice I am compelled to treat even such a hollow and pretentious proposition with seeming decorum. And I must not withhold from your notice the suicidal effect of such an assertion, for argument I call it not. If it means anything at all it means—a plea of justification. Think of it, gentlemen. Justification! It is difficult to restrain one's feelings and to retain one's calm when it is seriously declared to our very faces that this defendant was justified in ceasing to exhibit the portrait-figure of the plaintiff, your wronged and outraged fellow-citizen, who has, indeed, but ill-deserved such cruel usage. What! Is he to suffer all the agonies of all the implications arising from such unwarrantable non-exhibition; all the unspoken defamatory and injurious imputations on his worthiness; all the suggestions that he was not what he had been; all the innuendos that he was now what he had not before been? Is he to be so held out to his townsmen who esteem him, to the yet wider world which does not know him, to the posterity which might be all the better for knowing him? Ah, gentlemen, are these things nothing? And pain and contumely, and latent slander, and the libel which is smuggled out of sight, and the scandal which glares out

of the vacuum that malice has forged — are all these nothing? Or things to be justified? What was, what is, this Galaxy, this Show, this Exhibition, this British trap for hard-earned and alas! too scarce Irish money? It professes to exhibit the models or portraits of persons famous and infamous—the hero and the assassin, the patriot and the traitor, the saint and the apostate. In short, of persons famous because of their fame, or because of their infamy. In other words, the infamously famous and the famous truly fame-worthy. Now, in which category was the plaintiff? On which horn of the dilemma, if not on both, will the defendant impale himself? If the plaintiff was considered famous in the worthy sense, what had he done, what is it alleged that he had done, to forfeit that character? And if he had not done anything to forfeit that character, then his being withdrawn, wiped out, and unexhibited is a libel, a slander, a tort, a stab in the back with the dagger left reeking in the quivering breast, and a vital blow to all that a man, a public man, a professional man, and an Irishman holds most dear; and for that exemplary damages are due to him. But if it be implied that he belonged to the other category, what punishment can be too severe for a man who, for his own miserable ends, comes here and brands and pillories the best of Ireland's sons — aye, and incites Irishmen and women to *pay* to see the unblushing spectacle of the suppressed exhibition? Gentlemen, it is a hideous phase of complicated treachery: it is horrible.

"'But,' says the Counsel for the defendant, 'surely he could do what he liked with his own property.' No doubt—within certain limitations. But that is begging the question. Was that figure the defendant's own absolute and undivided property in the sense that the plaintiff had no rights or interests therein? That is a

point for you to consider and for me to guide you to a perfectly independent opinion—in accordance with my direction.

"Gentlemen, I ask you to find that the defendant had no such absolute and undivided property in that figure, and that the plaintiff had distinct rights and interests therein, both material and immaterial—rights, perhaps, superior and more subtly inherent than those which the mere incident of corporeal possession seemed to give to the defendant. You will take your own fearless view of this point, but it is my duty to rule, and it is yours' to follow my ruling, that it would be the abnegation of common-sense, a crime, a blunder, a folly, and an inconceivable stultification to hold otherwise. Far be it from me to prompt you, much less to venture to dictate to you; but that is the conclusion which you will, and must, arrive at, even if I have failed to convince you. Now, let me make it clear to you. A statue, a bust, a portrait, the reflection in a mirror, and a shadow, are all essentially identical—barring the substance they are made of, or made on. *But, whose is the face?* Whose can it be but the man's to whom it belongs and who has the wearing of it? Can it possibly be anyone else's? If my shadow falls on another man's wall, it is a joint tenancy—while it lasts. It does not make that wall mine by my shadow's temporary occupancy thereof; it does not make my shadow his by his transient accommodation of it. He can take his wall away; I can take my shadow away. The partnership, such as it was, is dissolved, and neither party has recourse or complaint the one against the other. That is unquestionable. It was merely an accidental juxtaposition.

"But, if the owner of that wall comes to me and solicits, for his own purposes, interests, aims, ends, and advantages, the projection of my shadow, or the loan of my shadow,

on that wall: and he then goes and makes capital of it, publishes the arrangement to the world, and gets me identified with that wall, and known in connection with it as imparting to me a certain renown, honour, or dignity by virtue of that association, is he at liberty to sever that connection without notice to me? Is he free to act on merely his own irresponsible caprice, malice, or rapacity, even in the absence of any contract or understanding, as in this case? And am I to be left with the finger of scorn ringing in my ears, the laugh of the unfeeling corroding my peace, the sneers of the rancorous rankling in my bosom—and with no remedy, no compensation? Nay, with a plea negatively tantamount to justification thrown into my teeth, besides?

"But ah! gentlemen, there is the yet keener pang when the very material which bore the plaintiff's lineaments are used to represent those of another man. Think of it! Those lineaments, by which he is known and discriminated and differentiated from all the countless millions on this revolving orb; by which alone he apprehends and recognises himself; by which parent and wife and child think of him, pray for him; by which he is hailed by his friends, individualised by the world; without which he would be a moral monster, an undocketed schedule, a brief unendorsed, a human thing and not a man, an item and not a being—those lineaments were especially designed for him, expressly reserved for him, directly bestowed upon him before his very birth; and they are his—his, gentlemen, his own, and not another's. Tyranny itself never stooped so low as to deny it. The iron mask shrouded the victim's face, but, below it, that face was his—inalienable.

"The plaintiff's face was in wax, and in the custody, care, possession and control of the defendant. Gentlemen, where is that face now? We know that he melted the

wax, but that is not the point. I ask, *where is that face now?* What has he done with it? Whither has he banished it?

"Even if the mere inanimate raw material or visible medium—so many pounds of wax—were the property of the defendant, the face was not. And again I ask, where is that face now? Is it to wander about indefinitely, impalpably, unceasingly, until fortuitous chance bring it into combination with a set of conditions which may once more give it a local habitation and a physical embodiment? And is the plaintiff to suffer all this, and yet am I to be told that there is no case to go to the Jury, and you to be invited to say that here is no wrong to be redressed, here is no right to be vindicated, here is no pain endured to be atoned for?

"Gentlemen, we have been an unhappy race; we are a misunderstood race; but we know that deep down at the very roots of the Irish heart are the chords that (consistently with economy) vibrate with sympathy for suffering, that burn with indignation at wrong, that thrill with joy when able to remedy it, and that would wither with shame and scorn at the mere thought of sparing the pocket of the English adventurer who dares to come to this sacred Isle *for*, instead of *with*, money: to wring that coin from her gifted sons which he should rather scatter amongst them as some slight reparation for the centuries which have gone—as some weak oblation to those which are to come. Gentlemen, consider your verdict—which is simply one of damages."

There were tears as well as cheers when this magnificently-spoken address ended, and Mr Justice Cartophle retired behind his widely-riven jaws and eyebrows.

The Jury conferred for one minute, without leaving the box. Then the verdict was given. It was for the plaintiff —damages £10,000.

The audience broke into a roar of applause, which was taken up and carried on and on outside, until all Ballynoggin was as vocal as a resounding shell.

Lawyer Kennada was carried shoulder high round the square, tar barrels blazed that night in his honour, and the majority of the able-bodied citizens went to bed in their boots.

"Joe," whispered Mottleboy to his son, "this 'ere vardic' will be the making of us—see if it isn't. Ten thousand—ho, ho, ho! Ten tho—oh, my old sides, Joe! —ho, ho!"

That Young Minx

Chapter I

It happened before the Third Riding P.F.R.L.Y. Bayoneteers—the "Tha Knaws"—left Ballynoggin Barracks.

Mr Mountford O'Greaves, the young Assistant Surgeon, had quitted the service and was testing a practice with the view to purchase and settling down, with Geraldine Byrne as his wife: and his successor—Mr Dobley Hawes—was making a pleasant call at O'Flaherty Hall.

There was the usual light chatter, whilst the Colonel read, and the mater knitted, and one of the younger girls sorted coloured wools and the other gummed up broken music sheets, and only Valentina smiled and beamed and gave sole and pleased attention to the visitor, who obviously was likewise attracted by her.

"We've just had a bit of luck," he remarked, in the course of the discursive talk. "A young soldier turns out to be quite a clever dispenser, and with a fair knowledge of medicine and surgery also. And he's steady and gentlemanly, too. It's quite a find."

"Oh, how fortunate!" exclaimed Miss O'Flaherty. "Was he a student, I wonder?"

"Don't know—nor care," laughed Mr Hawes. "The funny thing is that, as he says, his father was an officer in the same Regiment—only the other battalion—"

"What's that?" cried the Colonel sharply.

Mr Hawes repeated.

"What's his name? I remember every one for years and years—"

"Oh—let me see. Ha, yes: it's Portellis, Bryan Portellis—"

"By God! you don't say so—" shouted the Colonel, starting up and shaking the young surgeon by both shoulders, so that the reiteration came out in a series of clicks.

"Why," said the Colonel answering his wife's questioning eyes, "I've been seeking him high and low for ever so long. His father was a dear friend of mine—died in an action on the Afghan frontier. I'm one of the trustees of the marriage settlement, you know. His son—who's been lost sight of these ten years past—has become Sir Bryan, on his uncle's death eighteen months ago. By Jove!"

He was intensely excited.

"Oh hang it all!" muttered Mr Hawes. "I shall lose him now. Sorry I mentioned it."

Valentina heard, and looked at him with disillusioned gaze. She now beheld a hard, cunning, selfish, ginger face, a foxy eye, and a scheming, parasitical, cruel mouth; and she, there and then, expelled him from all possible regard or respect, or even tolerance. He was contumeliously ejected from her mind.

The Colonel rang all the bells in the room and hurried everybody about. He was going to ride over to the barracks at once.

"Please drive, papa—and take me," said Valentina. "Oh, I am sure that there's some pretty or interesting story about his disappearance; and there's sure to be a love story about his enlistment. Do let me come with you, papa dear,—and take the mail-cart."

Considering that she was the only person in the house who always had her way with the Colonel, her beseeching

tone, on this occasion, might have struck him as somewhat unusual—but that men are so dense.

Her mother and sisters clearly discerned in it Mr Dobley Hawes' scornful and irrevocable dismissal.

Within ten minutes the mail-cart was rolling swiftly to the barracks.

Major Murphison was on the parade ground, with some of the officers.

After the usual salutations—Miss O'Flaherty going to call on some of the ladies, and the mail-cart being led away by a soldier delighted to have the touch and sight of a horse—the Colonel was beginning to explain the special object of his visit, when his eyes fell on a squad of young soldiers.

"Why," he cried, "there he is. His father's very image and expression. That's Portellis—I'll swear to him."

The Major called the sergeant, who confirmed the Colonel.

"Call him out, Murphison," said the Colonel in great excitement.

A word to the sergeant, and the young fellow stood, handsome and erect, at attention before them.

A few questions.

Yes, he was Bryan Portellis. His father was Captain Bryan Portellis of the first battalion of the same Regiment. He found it out—though Dr Coyninge told him otherwise. He did not remember his mother: but he dimly recollected something about India and his coming home with some other children and their mother and native servants.

And the boarding-school in England until he was about twelve.

Since then he had been kept by—had lived with Dr Coyninge, in Dublin—

"Why," at this point exclaimed Colonel O'Flaherty, "Coyninge was one of our surgeons. Queer stories about him. Ran away with—h'm!"

Was he happy as a soldier?

The young fellow smiled; then his ingenuous face showed that various thoughts and feelings moved within him.

"By heaven!" said the Colonel apart to the Major, "I seem to see my old dear chum, his dad, across the years that have gone, in every line and twist and shade of his face."

Yes—very happy, in a way, so far as having sufficient and regular meals, and clothes that he can appear in in daylight, and self-respect.

The Colonel pulled the Major on one side.

"Murphison—listen to this—just listen to this. And all this time his money, and the very interest of it, piling up, piling up: and to-day he's a baronet with something like twenty thousand a year, and several mansions and parks. I want him—his discharge I mean. I'll give you a cheque at once for his smart money. Give him unlimited leave until all formalities are completed. Thank you, Murphison. About clothes for him? Where's Dion?"

His son came up, and both the seniors measured him and Portellis with bent brows and calculating eyes.

"To a tee, I say," remarked the Major.

"Not a tape's thickness between them," assented the Colonel.

Then they explained to the young soldier, who was too astonished to understand, and to the young officer who hurried him away to his quarters.

"Murphison," said the Colonel, who, notwithstanding his name, was an Englishman and practical. "I think I see how it was. That scamp Coyninge—he always was

a bit of a sharp in money matters—prigged poor Portellis' estate—what he had—and kept the boy in ignorance and in misery. By the Lord! but we'll get to the bottom of it all. Lend me a man or two, there's a good chap. I want to send a line to Kennada, the attorney, to come to the house, and also to Mr Brady, whose advice is even better than a lawyer's, and he's also a magistrate. Thanks. I'll write a line to each in Dion's quarters—"

"Oh, come to mine and welcome," said the Major heartily, "while the boy gets into some proper clothes; and your lad may as well have leave and drive him to the Hall. I'll tell him. And maybe, I'll ride round myself."

"Do, do, my dear Murphison. I—I rather fancy Mrs Byrne is coming—"

"Ah, would ye, now! But it's all right. I shall get my step in a few months, and then—"

"Ha, ha! I know, I know."

When Valentina came out to rejoin her father, she was accompanied by quite a number of ladies whose interest and curiosity she had stimulated.

She saw her brother in mufti, with a young gentleman of his own height and build—a good-looking, bashful, well-dressed fellow, undeniably a gentleman.

Dion introduced him.

"Sir Bryan Portellis."

There was a good deal of smiling, and of pleasant chit-chat.

One irrepressible youthful matron wagged an admonitory finger at him, and laughingly called him "a naughty boy," which amused him: and another merry but unreflecting young lady asked him, with mock seriousness—"What's her name? Do tell us."

But he did not smile at this question, but, on the contrary, went red and white, and his lip, for a

moment trembled, and a proud, pained look came into his face.

A feeling almost maternal rose in Valentina's fair bosom, and she took him in her charge.

"You're coming to our house with my brother Dion. My father's your trustee, you know. Now, Dion, make haste, or we shall leave you miles behind."

* * * * *

Mrs O'Flaherty, the Colonel, Mr Brady and Mr Kennada heard Bryan's simply-told story.

"It must be about ten years ago since Dr Coyninge took me from the boarding-school in Devon. We came to London, when he was living in lodgings. Mrs Coyninge was there, too, and the youngest daughter, Emily—quite a child. The other two—both older than I—were at school. Of course, I learnt that afterwards, for I didn't know them then.

"After some weeks we all came to Dublin—the elder girls and all—and went to a big house in St Stephen's Green. I remember that most of the furniture was covered up, and heaps of things piled together, and the time it took to get all the rooms straight, and painting and whitewashing and chimney-sweeping, and all sorts of things done. The house was very full of curiosities and pictures, and furniture and china, and plate and lots of books.

"Oh, I must tell you that when we came to Dublin the doctor called me to his room, and told me that my name was not Bryan Portellis at all, but only William Bryant. He said that there was a very sad story about it, and that if I had any respect for the Captain's memory, who had been so good to me and had sent me to school out of kindness, and even allowed me to use his name for

a time, I would never dare to mention that name again. He said that he was inclined to keep me out of charity, if I obeyed him and behaved myself; but he would kick me out as a beggar brat if I ever presumed to talk or think of myself in connection with the Captain or with the name of Portellis, and wring my obstinate young neck into the bargain. He made me give him my school-books and prizes and certificates, and he tore out the pages on which my name was written—even the covers, if the writing was there—and threw them into the fire."

Mr Kennada was making notes. The others looked at each other.

"But," continued Bryan, "there were some things that he did not get. He did not know I had them, and I would have died rather than let him take them from me.

"There was a little prayer-book my dear father had given me, in which he had written my name and his own. It was a present he sent me. And another book. And some letters all the way from India.

"Oh, I prized them, I prized them more than all the world.

"For I had nobody else, out of the school, whom I knew. Nobody ever came to see me; I had nowhere to go in my holidays; nobody ever gave me anything—I had only my dear, dear dad in India. I used to cry a good deal when by myself, at nights; and I hugged and kissed his writing in my prayer-book, and the other book, and his letters; and I would talk to them, as if they were telegraph wires to him, and he could hear me; and that cheered me, and gave me courage and patience. My very prayers and the hymns I sang in church were, in my own mind, to him.

"I never let these books and letters out of my own keeping. I wore them inside my clothes—I would rather

have been cut to pieces than lose them ; I should have died of despair and grief if I had lost them."

Mrs O'Flaherty's tears were falling fast, and the Colonel went to a window and swore.

"Did you succeed in retaining possession of these books and letters?" asked Mr Brady, steadying his voice.

"Yes, sir ; and amongst a lot of litter and lumber in the house I found books—school-books and papers, some of them—which had belonged to my father ; and I hid them."

"Tell us something, Sir Bryan, of your life with the doctor," suggested Mr Kennada.

"Oh, it was very miserable. I was treated neither as a servant nor as a member of the family. I was set to all sorts of work—and always sent to my attic when there was any company. I had to take my meals, when I got them, in the surgery. I begged to be put to school, or to a situation. I had to clean windows, boots, knives, wash bottles and do many other things, but scarcely ever allowed out of doors. I took to reading—there were heaps of books. I worked at Latin and French ; I read anything and everything ; I became useful to him as a dispenser, and helped in his surgery.

"But I was always treated with contempt and insult by the entire family ; I never had a penny ; I had only cast-off rags of clothes, until I became ashamed to show myself ; and only at night could I steal out for a walk ; and I would have been almost starved as well if it had not been for the pity of the servants.

"I would have gone mad, or have poisoned myself, but —but for——

"Mrs O'Flaherty, she is only a servant, a housemaid, an orphan brought up by an elder sister who

is the wife of a poor law writer—a worthy man in low health.

"Ah, you should see her—a sweet, bright, noble-hearted girl, younger than myself.

"She made my life endurable, with her brave spirit, and counsel, and encouragement.

"It was she who woke up, if she did not inspire and strengthen, everything that was in the least sensible and resolute and good in me; held me to my studies; hardened me to patience; brightened me with hope; and often kept me from starving.

"She had picked up some knowledge—from words dropped in her hearing, or papers lying about; and she was sure that the doctor had been abusing me all the time—robbing me, insulting me, and—worse, oh, far worse than all—filching from me not only my true name, but what was more precious, the dear thought of my father—the cherished connection with the only creature on earth that I belonged to, or that belonged to me—even if it were only a sacred memory.

"I did not know what to think. Sometimes, she convinced me: sometimes, I doubted, or feared. I had no one whom I would, or could, consult: I had no knowledge of the world nor a friend in it—except Gerty:—that was her name.

"At last I made up my mind to wait and work and endure until I was one and twenty.

"I had no clear idea what was to happen then: but I was convinced that I could do nothing before attaining that age: and so we settled it at that.

"The dear girl often pressed some of her poor wages on me—if only for decent shoes to go out in—but, of course, I could not consent to that.

"She was clever, though. One day she brought me

a sheet of her brother-in-law's law writing, and suggested that I should try and write like that, and, maybe, I might earn a little.

"It didn't come easy, but at last I managed it, and was able through his help, to earn a few shillings.

"I bought myself some clothes—one article at a time. What a thing it was to contrive, and save up, and manage!

"One day I read in a paper something about the Regiment—my father's Regiment—being stationed here; and, all at once, the idea shot into my head that the right thing, the only thing, for me to do was to come here, and enlist.

"Gerty was startled. She thought a great long while, in her quiet collected way: then she cried softly to herself; and then she came to me, and kissed me and said, 'Go, my dear. It's hard to part, but something tells me that it's for your good.'

"So I put together all my books and papers—except that little prayer-book, which has never lost the sound of the beating of my heart, and it's here now—and made a parcel for Gerty's brother-in-law to take care of. It's in the strong room of the lawyers he works for—Fallons & Keyes—"

"I know them," said Mr Kennada. "Very good people, indeed."

"And," went on Sir Bryan, "I bought myself a strong pair of boots, and a bit keepsake for Gerty, and had nearly a half-crown in hand for the journey—for I was to foot it, and I did.

"She broke the only ring she had—it had been her mother's—and we each have a half of it.

"We parted—promising to be faithful and true to each other in life or in death: and now—ah, now I thank God

that I can take my sweet, gentle, pure-hearted girl to my arms; for I would not value wealth nor rank, nor life itself, without her."

Mrs O'Flaherty—though she had three daughters of her own for whom she dreamt and prayed for good husbands—rose and kissed his brow. The woman rose superior to the mother.

The Colonel scowled heavily.

Mr Kennada, lawyer-like brushed aside what he inwardly designated "this sentimental rubbish."

Mr Brady said nothing, but was very thoughtful.

"What's to be done, Kennada?" enquired the Colonel.

Mr Kennada was a man of remarkably quick as well as keen perception. In the presence of Mr Brady, he could not venture to affect being oracular or abstruse. He came promptly to the point.

"There is no moral, or rational doubt," said he, "of this young gentleman's good faith and authenticity. But you have to proceed regularly, and the identity must be established in a legal manner—that is to say, by the accumulation of all attainable evidence to support all the reasonable presumptions. And this is necessary not only for your protection as a trustee, but also for his own sake, present and future."

"That seems right enough," growled the Colonel, and Mr Brady nodded his head approvingly.

"To begin with, therefore, may we see the little book—the prayer-book—you spoke of?" resumed the solicitor.

"Certainly," and in a few minutes he emerged from the corner where, with intuitive delicacy, he had gone to detach the little bag, suspended by a ribbon round his neck, which held the treasured souvenir; and he handed to Mr Kennada.

The three gentlemen examined the inscription, and

even the date on the imprimatur, with intense interest and minuteness.

Mrs O'Flaherty held out her hand for the little book, and the tears sprang to her eyes as she read the fond and pious lines of the loving father in India to his solitary and motherless child in England,

"Of course," cried the Colonel, "that's poor Portellis' writing—I have dozens of letters and things from him. And I know that he was at that identical rat-trap of a station at that very time."

"No doubt, no doubt, Colonel," observed Mr Brady. "But it is to his own interest that the enquiry and the proof be as exhaustive as possible while the proofs exist, or are attainable, so that his position shall be made impregnable."

"Yes, sir—very forcibly put—just my opinion," said Mr Kennada.

"If I may suggest," went on Mr Brady, "with all deference to Mr Kennada—"

That gentleman urged him to proceed.

"Put down every possible detail that he can remember up to the time that he was taken from the school—important or unimportant—everything. Names of masters, names of all the boys he can think of, and of the servants, meals, games, matches, incidents, the church, clergy, walks, illnesses, doctors, punishments, prizes, nicknames —not a single trifle should be omitted."

"Good, good, good," said Mr Kennada, and the Colonel whispered "dashed nonsense!" to himself.

"Then, I suppose, you will get those other documents —especially the letters—which he says he has in safety in Dublin."

"Yes, certainly," answered the solicitor, and then he saw that it was his turn to play.

"Of course, of course," he said, "and I shall take the requisite steps for verification, and thus build up, with the other materials, an irresistible body of proof. But I also propose to set on foot the necessary investigations as to this worthy doctor's dealings with his father's estate."

"Quite right"—Mr Brady had overlooked this.

"I shall," went on Mr Kennada, "have the registers in London and Dublin searched for the probate, if any: and, in any case, we shall bring the rascal to book."

"Yes, damn him!" exclaimed the Colonel. "I know him. I know him. Very likely it was a military will—dying man—action, you know. But you'll find all that out. And, now I think of it, by Jove! it was his mother's house in St Stephen's Green. I remember now. The Honourable Mrs Portellis, to be sure. A little queer in the head, she was. Life interest. I'll look up the marriage settlement of which I am the sole surviving trustee, and shew it to you."

He became greatly excited. It was settled that young Portellis should set down all such details as Mr Brady had suggested, and as many more as he could bring to mind; that Mr Kennada should at once go back to his office and send instructions to his agents in Dublin and London; and that Portellis should write to the law writer to bring the parcel of documents deposited in his employer's strong-room—five pounds being enclosed for his expenses.

The young baronet turned very red: then he laughed merrily as he avowed that he had never possessed such an amount, or anything like it, and that his then capital did not exceed ninepence.

There was a roar of laughter, in which even Mrs O'Flaherty joined, in her sweet way.

"And I have thousands and thousands of his money," shouted the Colonel—"quite outside what he now

inherits, with its accumulations. Ninepence! Ho, ho, ho!"

"Oh, don't mention the question of money, Sir Bryan," said Mr Kennada, with smiling deference.

"Dash it all!" cried the Colonel, "I'm going to put five hundred pounds to your credit, any way—verification or no verification. I am satisfied up to the hilt—aye, up to the hilt-head. And, wait a minute, you'll want some pocket-money—"

"I have fifty or sixty pounds in notes in my pocket-book," said Mr Brady. "Here they are. You can send me a cheque bye and bye," and he handed them over.

"Why, why," almost stammered Portellis, "this wealth—this—it almost frightens me."

"I would suggest to you," said Mr Kennada who had been reflecting deeply, "that, in writing, you should disclose as little as possible about your succession. It is better, at this stage, to refrain from letting that doctor fellow learn too much—"

"Oh," replied the other, "I always write to her in care of her sister, for she told me that she suspects that my letters would be tampered with, or suppressed, if I addressed them to the house."

"Well, I beg you—I earnestly beg you, Sir Bryan—to confine yourself, for the moment, to saying that you are well, and are with good friends, and are taking your discharge from the army, and have come into some money. Not a word more. The good news won't run away. Take your lawyer's advice. We don't want—even indirectly—to put the doctor on his guard."

"But—but—"

"Don't you see," Mr Kennada fixed his eyes, first on the Colonel, and then more markedly on Mr Brady, and spoke with impressive gravity—he was playing a fine

card—"don't you see that the doctor is evidently a fraudulent trustee, and he might cut and run? On the other hand, we close in on him, and, even if we can't compel restitution—and perhaps, because he can't make it—he can absolutely confirm and establish our title beyond all possibility of question: and he may be glad to do so if once cornered in due form and force."

The Colonel bent his brows whilst slowly absorbing this reasoning, but Mr Brady gave a satisfied nod, and complimented Mr Kennada. It was honour, pride and glory to him to receive praise from such a quarter.

Chapter II

Dion went over to Brady Castle and brought back Patricia—Patsey Brady; and they had a very merry evening, after the family dinner; especially as Major Murphison was of the party, and Mrs Byrne and her daughters came later, and two or three officers likewise dropped in after mess.

Music, dancing, billiards, politics, flirtation and round games: but the ladies thrilled delightfully over the romance of Sir Bryan, and some of them cast admiring and friendly glances at him; and the men liked him for his own sake, and for his father's—since he had been one of 'Their's -and rejoiced in his good fortune with manly generosity.

That night's mail from Ballynoggin carried Kennada's momentous letters to his agents, and Portellis' to his sweetheart, and to the law-writer.

It also bore one which, as the quick result showed, was calculated to render those of the astute lawyer superfluous.

It was a note to Dr Coyninge from Dr Dobley Hawes—whose rancour had been kindled over the young soldier-dispenser's sudden importance and his own contemptuous fall from favour.

In that communication he half sarcastically made mention of the ugly duckling which had so surprisingly burst into a fine swan in a single day—in fact, that same day. He asked if it was all genuine, or had everyone gone mad, or been taken in, over this Sir Bryan Portellis concealed in the person of the poor soldier boy, who had tramped from Dublin to enlist in the Regiment, and whom he had employed as a dispenser.

And was there anything against him, and why had he left and enlisted, and who and what was he, in reality? Also, he was as much amused as amazed at the craze. Of course, he wrote in strict confidence as between professional men. Moreover, he was aware that his correspondent had also been a surgeon in the Regiment.

If, next morning, when that letter was opened, a bombshell had burst in that big house on St Stephen's Green, the astonishment, consternation, and even terror, could scarcely have been greater.

Dr Coyninge had a bit of a fit and fell forward amongst the breakfast things. When he had been laid on a couch, and the two younger girls sent out of the room, his wife read the letter, and fell screaming on the floor. And when, damp and dishevelled, she was at length brought to, and propped into an easy chair, and the servants sent away, Miss Coyninge perused the fateful missive, and straightway lapsed into hysterics until the house was shrill with her full-chested shrieks.

The doctor pulled himself together, with the aid of half a tumbler of brandy, and, after a while, his wife

and daughter came round and wept very copiously. Then the younger girls and the servants were once more ordered away, and the two pallid ladies and the white-faced doctor were left alone—bending gaunt and desperate eyes on each other.

There ensued a miserable scene of recrimination, regrets, fear, disappointment. Each heaped burning reproaches on the other, provoking fierce rejoinders, cutting reminders, hypocritical justifications, and remorseless blames and condemnations.

"Could not I have kept him?" cried Miss Coyninge in a raised voice. "Of course, I could have kept him—if you hadn't kept him as a drudge, a menial, a pauper dependant—fed on scraps and leavings, and not too many of them; in wretched rags of your worn-out clothes; with never a word but it was a sneer or a jeer. And you said he was only some poor soldier's son, and there was some scandal about his birth——"

"H'm!" growled her father—trying to turn this cataract of words—"and you gave yourself superior airs, and thrust him into the arms of—of——"

"That young minx—that Gerty, the housemaid," bitterly laughed his wife.

"Yes," furiously replied the daughter, "and you both chuckled at it, and said—'let the young minx have him, and marry him, and sink him into the dregs, and there an end of him. Once submerged—and he's as good as buried!' You know you did, Pa; you know you did; you know you did."

Her father and mother looked at each other, as if unable to understand this heated intensity. They had been thinking, and were sadly thinking now, of the money aspect of matters—the betrayed trust in the past, and their legal responsibilities for it, as well as the stoppage of their

pillage, and the terrible loss of the young man with his rank and wealth.

And there was the reflection, like a stab, that to have secured the latter, or even his favour or friendship, would have been at the very least, immunity, and absolution, and indemnity as to the former.

"Oh, you force me to speak," excitedly went on the young lady, her handsome face aflame and her eyes ablaze. "I did love him—secretly I loved him, and ate my heart out in fighting against it. But I believed what you said about him—and I saw that he was a drudge and poor-spirited, and—always miserably dressed, yet proud and oh! always so thorough-bred—a gentleman, though he didn't think it, and cleaned knives and bottles, and starved in an attic! And I had to laugh and sneer, while it was like knives cutting into my flesh to see him look at—at that house-maid, and to see the expression of her eyes as she looked at him; and to know that they talked together—and I could not—and, perhaps, she shared her meals with him—for the servants wouldn't have stood the treatment he had to endure. I hardened myself—I—I— Oh, I'd give the world, the world, to change places with her—with that young minx—even if he were still a poor, plain, private soldier! I would, I would, I would!"

Then she collapsed in a torrent of tears.

"And to think that he is now Sir Bryan Portellis—immensely rich—several good houses—— My God! Only to think of it!" cried Dr Coyninge despairingly. "And—and—that young minx, as you call her, to carry him off——"

"Never!" almost shouted Mrs Coyninge.

"Never!" repeated Gerty—"the young minx"—in the depth of her tumultuously-beating heart, as, with hands

tightly pressed to her panting breast, she stood, pale and trembling, in an adjoining room, and through an old-fashioned press or cupboard which was built half in each room, had listened to every word.

She divined from the commotions of that morning that there was something connected with, or affecting her lover, who, as she well knew, had been shamefully treated and victimised; and she felt herself justified, for his sake, in gathering knowledge likely to protect him, or to benefit him.

Dr Coyninge listened to his daughter's violent avowals at first with surprise, followed by impatient anger at the intrusion of so miserable and insignificant a thing, at this critical moment, as his daughter's personal feelings.

But this mood suddenly changed to acute interest as a new idea shot into his head.

He drank some more brandy, and walked up and down the room for a time. Then the three of them gathered close and conferred in low tones.

They evolved a programme which put them in a cheerful, almost in a buoyant, frame of mind.

The doctor feverishly packed a small portmanteau and took the very next train to Ballynoggin.

So did Mr James Versey, the law writer. He knew the doctor by sight, and, not altogether ignorant of things, he guessed the object of his journey.

He congratulated himself on his own promptitude. He had, on receipt of the startling letter, lost no time in getting the little parcel from the office strong-room, despatching his wife to her sister with the letter addressed to her and enclosed in his own, and, without waiting for message or reply, hastening to the railway station with an irreducible minimum of luggage in a veteran brief-bag.

Arrived at Ballynoggin Mr Versey, suspicious and observant, stood modestly aside, watched the doctor mount a car, and heard him direct to be driven to the Barracks.

"That will put me a little ahead," said he to himself, as he, in turn, drove off to O'Flaherty Hall.

Young Portellis received him with great heartiness and placed him at his perfect ease. His manner showed no trace of change, and he showered upon him questions as to Gerty—the absence of whose answer evidently gave him a good deal of pain.

Mr Kennada was at the Hall. There was a great deal to do, and a member of the firm of the family solicitors was expected.

The documents brought by Versey were eagerly inspected; and nobody thought any the less of the young baronet because of his trembling hand and flushing face and dimmed eyes and broken voice, as he once more handled those dear and hallowed letters. He felt as if his father were there, in spiritual reality, at that moment.

The Colonel was almost violent at the mere suggestion that any further trouble need be taken.

"Why, of course, they were written by Bryan Portellis. Who should know better than I? And—look at him!—equally of course he is Bryan Portellis, his son. The entire battalion will swear to him at first sight—and stick to it the longer they look. And the very voice, too, and his ways! Don't tell me you want further proof. Proof!" he repeated scornfully.

Versey told them of the doctor's arrival in the town.

They glanced at each other. How could he have known?

"I'll bet a pony," cried the Colonel, "that that surgeon chap—Hawes, Dobley Hawes—sent him a line or wire. He was here yesterday, and, of course, he knows.

Always thought the beggar a bit of a bounder and sneak."

"Anyway," said the practical and ready-witted lawyer, "we must be prepared for him; and extract some—perhaps, a very great deal—advantage from his kind visit. It seems to me that he will save us a great deal of work.

"Like to shoot the scamp," muttered the Colonel.

Kennada had a happy thought.

"Colonel, would you mind telling your butler to be handy when the doctor calls, and to get him to write on the back of his card who it is he wants to see."

"Why, certainly," answered the Colonel, with a puzzled look.

"He can easily say that it's a rule of the house—many visitors here sometimes—Irish servants stupid and make hash of names—mistakes annoying and confusing, and so on. Pen and ink handy——"

"Still, I don't quite perceive," said the Colonel, doubtfully.

"Why, sir, he clearly is most anxious to see him—in view of the past, and, in his wild imagination, possibly of the future also. To see him, he must give the proper name—and it's a rod for his own back, besides service to us, that he'd be fabricating when he writes the words 'Bryan Portellis' on his own card, bedad!"

It was arranged that Versey remain in the house over-night, and Portellis and he went off together, the former to remain within call. They had much to talk about.

It fell out as Kennada had calculated. The doctor drove up, and in his wiliest manner tried to circumvent the suave and wilier butler—who, a few minutes later, presented the doctor's visiting card with the words "To

see Mr Bryan Portellis' written by him on its back. Neither the proffered (and re-pocketed) half-sovereign nor the smiling off-hand request "Oh, you can write the name, you know: my hand is rather cold and stiff," prevailed with the butler.

"Orders, sir," was his simple reply.

The solicitor's eyes twinkled as he read the card—to which he added the date and his own initials.

"Cunning fool!" he remarked. "He pretends not to know of his title, to give himself an air of disinterestedness. Please ask Sir Bryan to step this way, and, when you hear the bell, show Dr Coyninge up. Colonel, you will remain, will you not?"

"Afraid I can't keep still: my temper's boiling now. But, I think I'd better stay. Oh, look here. I don't think he knows of my change of surname—addition, that is. And a dozen years make a difference. I'll sit there, in that corner, with my back to the window. Just draw that curtain over a little; so. Now, haul him in. By Jove, I've to hold myself up. But I'll do it, if I've to bite my tongue—until the proper time."

He was bustling about whilst speaking, and he was duly stage-managed as he wanted. Sir Bryan came in, and was briefly informed that the doctor was coming up to see him, and then that gentleman was announced and shown in. Mr Kennada sat half-effaced at a table over a lot of papers.

"My dear boy, my dear boy, how could you, ah, how could you?" cried the doctor in an emotional and gently-upbraiding voice, as he hastily entered the room, and caught the young man affectionately by the arms.

"You have given us a world," he went on, "a world of anxiety and grief, by this episode, you dear young

rascal, you. And, and Olivia is simply distracted, distracted, poor girl!"

"You are mistaken, doctor," began the young man.

"Indeed, no: indeed, no, my dear Bryan. She's quite broken-hearted about you. It all came out. I suppose it began in some silly lover's quarrel — ha, ha!"

"Doctor, you are mistaken—and I am not. This is Colonel O'Flaherty, my trustee under my parents' marriage settlement, and this is Mr Kennada, my solicitor."

The courtesies were formal and constrained.

The doctor's exuberance and self-confidence diminished, but, with a certain fatuity, begotten of planned purpose and sustained by desperate obstinacy, he went on tc speak of painful days and sleepless nights of distress, and weary searchings, and his dear girl dying of sorrow, and of cruel undeserved desertion, before our eyes, our very eyes, sir.

And then he dramatically wiped his own.

The young man stood calm and unreproachful but unmoved, in severe dignity—disdainful, grieved, and coldly angry—at this grovelling imposture and dissimulation. At length he said:

"Mr Kennada, will you please speak to Dr Coyninge —I cannot. For there is so much that I could say—and I may be sorry afterwards—and what's the use?"

"Dr Coyninge," said the solicitor, "my agents are at this moment making the necessary investigations. We already know a good deal—a good deal, and it's a black record——"

"Damned black," growled the Colonel.

"You can speak, or not, as you think proper. As you are surprised and have no solicitor to advise you, perhaps

you'd best say nothing until called upon, as you will be, to account for your dealings with this gentleman's property, and your treatment of him——"

"And, by Heaven!" the Colonel was unable to remain quiet any longer, "he'll have to explain a good deal more than that." He strode forward and confronted the astonished visitor. "Coyninge, how did you get yourself into that Will, if it was a Will?"

"Why, Royle," cried the doctor.

"Colonel Royle-O'Flaherty, if you please," icily corrected the angry officer.

"Why—of course, I knew you were a friend of poor Portellis, and I looked for you everywhere——"

"H'm—except in the Army List or the Regimental Staff Headquarters, I presume," snarled the Colonel. "But, about that Will? Who were there and what were the circumstances?"

"He was hit—two places, one of them very bad. Dictated his Will. I read it over to him — most carefully——"

"Who were there—witnesses, you know? Or were there none?"

"Oh yes, there were—a sergeant, and another man. I forget their names: but I've got them somewhere."

"We shall find out and hunt up those men, if it costs a thousand pounds apiece, or more. For, Coyninge, I know what a dashed dirty beggar you've always been in money matters, and I very strongly suspect——"

He paused, caught Kennada's eye, and put his hand on the doctor's shoulder.

"Coyninge," solemnly, and in a low but distinct tone, in startling contrast to his previous storminess—"whose name did you give in your pretended reading over of that Will to the dying man—your's, or mine?"

"Oh, my God!" groaned the doctor.

"You'd better make a clean breast of it, now that you have a chance, Coyninge. Answer my question, sir. Your's—or mine?"

The doctor was unnerved. His limbs shook and he staggered into a chair.

"Give him a glass of water—or shall I fetch some spirits?" whispered Bryan, aghast, and deeply pained.

"I shall find it out, anyway. You can be silent now, if you prefer: but you'll have to answer somewhere else."

"Don't, don't, for heaven's sake," murmured the doctor, "I read out your name to him—but I inserted my own." He covered his face with his hands.

Then, between sighs and entreaties, it all came out. He had appropriated what there was of free or available money and convertible securities—some four or five thousand pounds; had drawn and used the income devolved from the death of the Captain's mother—over £600 per annum—as well as some rents and other receipts; and had usurped occupation of the house in St Stephen's Green.

The Colonel did not fail to remind him of the calculated cruelty and refined infamy with which he had treated the boy whom he had so feloniously made his ward; denying him the education and even the common necessaries of his position; seeking to degrade him; to rob him of his name and of the love and memory of his father; treating a solitary helpless child as he had done, stealing from him his youth, and bringing up his own family to heap every kind of contumely and derision and humiliation on him.

"And, all the while, you hound, you lived in his house and on his money! Tell me, sir, what is the especial kind of damnation that you deserve?"

"I throw myself on your mercy, on your mercy," sobbed the doctor, broken and—unabashed.

He willingly detailed what Mr Kennada wished particularly to know relative to young Portellis, thus establishing his identity beyond any doubt or cavil, even if no shred of other evidence, either direct or circumstantial, existed.

He perused, corrected and signed the statement, his signature being attested by the Colonel and the solicitor.

It was of no use, he pleaded, being asked to furnish accounts of his trusteeship. He would make what restitution he could—but that would not be much. The house—

"That," said Mr Kennada, "you must vacate at once. You shall have a week's time—but you must take nothing but your and your family's personal belongings. I shall put somebody into possession immediately——"

Sir Bryan whispered to him.

"A very good idea, sir. By all means. Dr Coyninge, you will do well to walk very warily, for you are, in effect, in the hands of the law. No tricks, mind. If Sir Bryan is disposed to extend to you any indulgence at all—it must depend upon your conduct. And, by all that is holy! I scarcely see how he can find it in his heart to have one kindly thought for you, for your conduct has been atrocious—atrocious. Not merely vulgar theft and swindling, but you wrecked his young life. Even if you restore his money, can you give him back his youth? Still, it is for him to act——"

"Please, please say no more—now," entreated Sir Bryan.

"It is so hard to stop when once you begin," urged the doctor feebly.

"When you begin," angrily amended the Colonel, "and when you never tried to stop."

The painful scene ended at last—the doctor being bidden to remain in the town and to present himself next morning at Mr Kennada's office.

On his departure Versey was made exceedingly glad on being appointed Sir Bryan's steward in Dublin at a salary that seemed princely.

He received the necessary instructions, and formal authorisation to take up his residence at once, with his wife, in the house there, and to see that the doctor removed nothing pertaining thereto. He would have all necessary legal assistance from the Dublin solicitors.

He was also furnished with funds for the maintenance of the house and servants, and was despatched back by the evening train.

Also, he was the bearer of Bryan's letter to Gerty.

Chapter III

Mrs Versey had hurried to St Stephen's Green with Sir Bryan's letter, which had come in that addressed to her husband, and, by the servants' entrance, sought her sister.

She found her in her own room, faint and pale, with wild hollow eyes, and bloodless lips.

"Hush!" she almost gasped. "Don't tell me. I know, I know.

"But Gerty"—she always treated her sister as if she were her daughter—"it's great and glorious news, and—and—I don't understand——"

"Oh! don't I thank God for it all—for him! And it's selfish I am to think of myself——"

"What do you mean, dear?"

"Ah, can't you see that he must tear me out of his heart? It is not now as it was."

"But he never will—never fear."

"Oh, but he must. It's for his good. A great gentleman—but he was always that at heart—a nobleman, with tremendous fearsome riches, castles and parks, and troops of men-servants, and horses and carriages, and equal to the highest in the land! And for him to think of me! Or, for me to shame him!"

"You shame him, my darling!" cried her sister indignantly, kissing the beautiful, despairing, heroic girl. "Is there a fairer, or dearer, or better——"

She fondled and comforted her young sister, playing, as she used to do, with the hair of the fair head which the kneeling girl had bowed in her lap; and then came the relieving tears.

At the same time, almost moment for moment, another distressful scene was taking place in another room in that house.

"Out of my house that young minx goes at once," Mrs Coyninge exclaimed, with concentrated fury.

"But, mamma, we shall have a scene," began her eldest daughter, the younger ones, frightened, keeping to their own apartment.

"What! you plead for her, you, you spiritless idiot—after losing him once——"

"Oh, ma, please, please don't go on."

"And, I suppose, you would like him to see her when he comes back, and to stand by, or in the background, as the demure little cat lifts her eyes to him and then casts them down, and pants and changes colour, and all but melts into his eager arms——"

Miss Coyninge rose, white to the lips, but restraining herself with great effort.

"Mamma!" Then she asked with a little smile, "Is it so very certain that he is coming back?"

"Certain? Why, of course it is. One word, one look from your father——"

"Ah! that was in the past; but now——"

"Bah! Some lawyer fellow has found him, and he is in a daze, and helpless—and he is coming back with your father. And that girl does not stay in my house another hour. I'll pay her wages and notice money and—and I've a good mind to search her box before she leaves."

"What! and have a policeman in, as was done in the last cook's case? Oh, no, no. Give me her money, please, and I shall see her and settle things quietly and without unpleasantness or fuss."

"Very well, very well; here it is. Oh, I could wish that every coin were a snakebite to her!" and she flung out of the room.

Miss Coyninge rehearsed to herself how she should carry out the business, and went up to Gerty's room, having ascertained that she was there with her sister. The latter circumstance promised to render matters easier and more matter-of-fact.

"Take me away, dear," she heard Gerty's sobbing voice say. "I must, I must go; I cannot stay here. He may come back, and he must not see me—now. Perhaps the Sisters will take me back to the Convent—I can work, you know——"

"Yes, yes, dear. Only be calm. You shall leave this house—but wait till James comes back—to-morrow at latest. Bryan can't possibly get away for some days yet. He said so in his letter. Oh, don't moan like that, my poor child, or you'll break my heart as well." Her own tears fell on the shining tresses strewn about her knees."

"Mary." Gerty raised herself, still on her knees, and looked at her sister. "Mine is not the only misery in this

house—perhaps, not even the worst, for it's brightened by the thought of sacrifice, of renunciation——"

"But, dear, if he does not want it, and would be made only unhappy by it."

"It—it—would pass—in time. He's a man, and other things would help—it is not as with us poor women. How could I drag him down, perhaps shame him in his grand new position? The very thought scorches my mind, and my selfishness would kill me, if my hurt pride did not."

"Shame him, Gerty!" answered her sister. "A sweet, good, well-educated girl like you? And our parents, though they had fallen poor, very poor, of late, were gentry time out of mind. How can you talk so?"

"But she," went on Gerty, disregarding this apostrophe, "has not even that consolation; she has only the sting of self-reproach——"

"She! Who? What do you mean, dear?"

"Miss Coyninge—Olivia," Gerty replied softly.

Miss Coyninge—who had stood still, irresolute, curious, excited, outside the partly-open chamber door, had not lost a word of the conversation, from Gerty's entreaty to be taken away—started violently at the mention of her name.

"Miss Coyninge!" echoed Mrs Versey.

"Yes, dear. She loves him—indeed she does: but she found it out only after he had gone. And it's hopeless—hopeless. Can he ever forget—what was a million times worse than the bad treatment—the insults and ridicules heaped on him every moment of his life? Oh, I've seen him—I've seen him livid, speechless, burning, crying, mad with passion at the wanton cruelty of it all. I've heard her low mocking laughs and titters when

he tried to slip away from sight because of his shabby clothes—"

"Shame, shame on her—for a woman!" cried her sister. "And to think that all this while they were living in poor Bryan's own house—for James found out that it belonged to his grandmother the Honourable Mrs Portellis—and, as likely as not, on his money. But, thank God! the day of reckoning has come—at last, at last."

"Oh, I pity her," resumed Gerty in gentle tones, pursuing her own thoughts—"I do pity her from my heart—for her's has got its sentence, and I know that it's a sentence of death."

Miss Coyninge, trembling and white, stole away like a shadow, and tottered into her own room.

It was, then, his house, and—now that this new light was thrown upon many things that rushed to her memory—his money that her father and the family had been using, whilst abusing him in most exquisite fashion from helpless boyhood! Oh, the branding falsehood, meanness, cowardice, villainy of it all! How dared she think of her own feelings in view of all this?

And, anyway, she knew that what Gerty had said was true—her love was hopeless.

It was just—apart from her own vile conduct towards him: for how could she ever look him in the face? Even if he were magnanimous enough, or stolid enough, to forgive, could she ever forget, or cease to despise and hate herself?

Yes—it was "a sentence of death."

These words came again and again into her mind: not to appal but almost as of deliverance and comfort, and wooing her submission.

When, a little later, her mother sent for her, that

lady could not understand why the summary dismissal had not taken place. The little matter was, however, solved in an easy manner—by Mrs Versey telling Mrs Coyninge that Gerty was not well and desired to go home with her. That gave the opportunity for the intimation that she was not to return, clinched by the monetary settlement.

The sisters were leaving—Gerty's things to be removed next day—when Miss Coyninge, obeying an impulse stronger than herself, threw her arms round the girl's neck, kissed her, and hurried from the room—to her mother's dumbfounded amazement and disgust.

Gerty was surprised—but understood. And so did her sister.

The scenes which ensued on the doctor's arrival on the following day must be left to the imagination.

Gerty wrote a few lines to Bryan rejoicing in his great good fortune, and promising to write at greater length in a day or two. She was not, she explained, feeling very well, and was staying with her sister. He was not to come to see her until she had again written to him. It was a simple, affectionate little note.

Two days later, whilst nearly at the end of dinner, a couple of letters were brought to him.

"Oh, certainly, read them by all means," smilingly said Mrs O'Flaherty as she noted his brightened face and shining eyes.

One of the letters he merely glanced at, turned over, and thrust indifferently into a pocket. The other he opened eagerly.

His expression quickly changed from glad expectancy to something like consternation. Pale and distraught, he rose, sat down again, and leant his head on his hand.

"Why, Bryan," began Dion; but his mother gave him a look, and he stopped.

"You are upset about something," said she gently to him. "Don't mind us, if you'd like to retire——"

"Oh, Mrs O'Flaherty, I—I—" his voice failed him. He pulled himself gamely together, and added, "Pray, advise me." He handed her the letter.

She cast a glance at her daughter and the other ladies, who, in a minute or two, filed out into the drawing-room, whilst the gentlemen engaged in conversation of an unusually animated description; and then they melted away to smoke, or play billiards or otherwise occupy themselves.

"Perhaps," said Sir Bryan, with still that desperate face, "perhaps, the Colonel and Mr Brady will kindly help me—and Dion——"

"Of course they will—I mean they shall," replied Mrs O'Flaherty. A word retained them in the room.

She returned him the letter, and her eyes were dimmed.

It was from Gerty, but enclosed in one from Versey who wrote that it had been sent to his wife with the request that it should be posted only on the following day. As, however, her letter to her sister was one of farewell and intimating that she, with letters of recommendation to the Sisterhood in New York, was on the point of sailing at once—he had thought it his duty to disregard the instruction to delay and had, therefore, posted her letter at once, hoping to be pardoned if, in doing so, he might seem to be officious.

Gerty's letter was very simple and very touching.

It was, she wrote, because she loved him so dearly, and always would, that she went away. She would be on the seas by the time he read these lines. She en-

treated him to forget her, and she would, all the rest of her life, think of him and pray for his happiness—and she willingly sacrificed her own for his dear sake. She thanked Heaven for his coming to his own—and she would never regret this going away, for it was because she loved him, and could not bear the thought of shaming him—for she knew well that titles and riches would not change him; and he must, please, not mind the tear-marks on the paper, but consider them her last kisses to him, and this letter her last, last farewell.

"Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?" cried he desperately. "I wish that this title and money had been—anybody else's, and I still a poor private soldier! Can't I get to Dublin to-night?" he asked wildly. "Or—or, wherever it is the ship starts from?"

The Colonel was visibly displeased. The idea of this well-born, wealthy, good-looking young fellow seriously retaining his affection for a domestic servant—and, what seemed more preposterous and even wicked, an honourable affection—was most repugnant to him, from the social point of view. He scowled and rumbled his sentiments into his moustache in an incoherent but discontented manner.

Dion, too, felt uncomfortable and distressed. He genuinely liked Bryan, and he, therefore, all the more, shared his father's views on the folly of attaching any importance to such a trifle as a young man's passing fancy for a pretty serving-maid.

Mr Brady was reflective and grave. The greater part of his life had been spent in the United States; he was, he never forgot, the son of a northern peasant, and his wife was the daughter of an artificer; and he had neither care for nor sympathy with unreasonable notions of caste, nor exaggerated ideas of family or blood.

"Oh, Mr Brady," said Mrs O'Flaherty, appealingly, "what is to be done? Do, please, advise us."

"I have been thinking," said he quietly. "But let us see where we are. Sir Bryan: answer me truly. Are you sure of your feelings towards this young lady? Sure of your feelings, and clear and honourable of your intentions?"

"As I stand here, and speak before God and you all—I am," solemnly said Bryan. "I love her—no, it is not merely gratitude because she was the only creature on earth who was kind to me—but I love her, and I swear that I shall marry no one else. And, oh, I would rather be back again in the ranks, a hundred times over, and know that we are united in heart, and waiting for each other, than have all the titles and glories of the land."

"H'm!" growled the Colonel. He also said a good many other things to himself.

Dion pressed Bryan's hand. Patricia Brady was, with his sisters, in the drawing-room, and his heart went out to his friend when he heard his firm and manly avowal.

"You hear him," said Mrs O'Flaherty. "Oh, I am sure that he truly means every word he says."

"Truly!" said Bryan. "Aye, dear Mrs O'Flaherty, so truly that I shall follow her, and seek her, and if I never find her I shall never come back—and let who will take title and money, for I shall hate both since they will have deprived me of her."

"I believe you," impressively said Mr Brady, after a short pause. "And now to business. Please sit down, and I think I can manage matters. This is how they stand:"

He referred to a printed card and some papers which he had in his pocket-book.

"The vessel that leaves Queenstown to-morrow for

New York is the *Ormuzda.* All her passengers are already embarked, and she rides ready to start so soon as the night mail arrives and the letter bags are on board. Now, there's no train to-night from Ballynoggin to either Dublin or Cork; and there's none in the morning that will get in in time before the vessel is off."

"Then what's to be done?" cried Dion, whilst Bryan, more inured to endurance, waited for the solution which he felt convinced would be forthcoming.

"Well, Dion," answered Mr Brady with a smile, "we'll have to race the Mail Express."

"Well, but how, if the morning trains won't fit," again said Dion.

"We shall have a special train. You know I am a director of this railway, and that may facilitate matters. I shall at once write and telegraph. May I do so here, Mrs O'Flaherty? Thanks."

Writing materials were spread on a side table, and he was busy for some minutes, whilst everybody watched him in silence.

"Yes—this will do. Instructions to the locomotive superintendent and the station-master to arrange for a special train at seven o'clock to-morrow morning. A telegram to the captain and one to the purser of the ship, and another to the bank manager at Cork to order a fast launch or tug to have steam up on our arrival, to reach, or follow, the *Ormuzda*; also to have a hundred pounds handy and letter of credit for a couple more, and to meet us. I'm a director of the bank."

"Us?" queried Dion.

"Certainly; I'll accompany him and see him on board. We shall, if there's no mishap, run ahead of the mail train, I'm allowing for distance, time, and engine power. I am also arranging for some minor matters——"

"God bless you, Mr Brady," said the young baronet, with full heart and choking voice.

"Oh, dad, please let me go, too. I shall come back with Mr Brady. I'll ask the Major for leave," pleaded Dion.

The Colonel would have liked to say that he would have no hand in such tomfoolery; but he thought better of it, and compromised by washing his hands of the entire matter, and everybody might do as he pleased, only don't ask him.

"Now, you two boys go and pack Bryan's trunk—for he must make up his mind to go the voyage. It's not in the least likely that the Captain—by the way, I know him well, its crusty, kind old Allknot—will delay one tick of his watch for anybody living; and it would take a long time to find any particular passenger; and I'm sure that it would take still longer to get her to change her mind—after showing so much resolution and character. And, Sir Bryan, although I have not seen her, she's worth all the trouble, and we'll drink to her health now, if we may, Mrs O'Flaherty. Come, Colonel, old friend: smooth your brow, and fill your glass. Sir Bryan—good luck to you, and to your love! Hurrah!"

A horse was put to and Mr Brady, himself, drove to the station, returning to the Hall, where it was arranged that he, and his daughter, remain the night—a message to that effect being sent to Mrs Brady.

The trunk packing did not take long, and the two young gentlemen joined the ladies, and great was the excitement when the latter were told what has been narrated.

"Oh, Vally," said Patricia, "what would I not give to accompany them to-morrow!"

"Yes, Patsey," replied Valentina, "what a nuisance we're not men! But why shouldn't we go as far as

Queenstown, and come back with your father and Dion? Do ask him, there's a duck."

But these aspirations had to be repressed.

Whether any but the servants—those endowed burghers of life, sequestered from its noise and strife, free from cares for the morrow and indifferent, for the most part, to the duties of to-day—slept much that night in the Hall it were hard to assert with assurance.

Before six o'clock next morning the girls were down—fresh, bright and vivacious as the birds. Geraldine Bryne, who had dined with them the night before, also came along, with her sisters.

It was a delicious, delirious time altogether, and their voices made morning yet more sweet. That early breakfast of Mr Brady and Sir Bryan and Dion!

All the girls waited on them in beautiful and bewitching confusion. They could almost have fed them as well as tended on them. They were resolved that the gentlemen must eat a good deal—all women think that men have unlimited aims and capacities of a gastric nature—and they were equally anxious that they should not miss the train. Naturally, they did not reflect that as it was their special train, bound to wait for them, they could not well miss it. But solicitude is happiness to a woman, as well as merit.

Their pretty little offices about the early breakfast table were well meant, but Bryan was too preoccupied to be sufficiently appreciative, and Mr Brady—old campaigner that he was—was too unheeding.

But Dion could not help a little expostulation.

"Look here, now, girls," he protested. "Here's somebody spilled a lot of sugar over the bacon and eggs: and—Oh, this must be you, Patsey—there's some Worcester sauce in my coffee. And how is any fellow to eat ham when there's a lot of marmalade trickling all

over it, and who wants pancakes afloat in anchovy sauce? Oh, go away, do, half a dozen of you!"

It was a sympathetic and exciting leave-taking. Mrs O'Flaherty kissed Bryan in her gentle motherly way; and the impulsive Patricia kissed him—ostensibly it was a kiss to his sweetheart who, she was sure, must be nice and good; and Valentina and all the other girls charged him with similar delightful messages.

There were cheers and tears and much enthusiasm in the send-off, and at last the carriage was out of sight, and they all gathered indoors and relieved the tension of their feelings in a unanimous and most comforting little cry.

Then they fell upon that breakfast table and cleared everything before them—incongruities not noticed, and the rehearsal not counting, as they were to have breakfast as usual at half past eight; and they all talked together, for this was romance indeed. Here was the newly-found heir, and so handsome and modest; and his sweetheart, a humble maid, escaping from him across the ocean so as not to mar his position, breaking her heart and giving up her happiness for love of him; and he now speeding like the wind, in a special train all to himself, to reach her before her ship leaves the shore—to win her back, or go with her!

What a knight! What a prince! Who shall say now that romance was a thing of the past, or that poetry was only in books?

They drank up the tepid tea and coffee and the milk, and ate impartially all there was, and were almost intoxicated with the thrilling drama.

They felt as if they stepped on air—and begged Mrs O'Flaherty to have breakfast at half-past seven instead of the usual time, an hour later.

The Colonel smoked in ferocious mood, to the accompaniment of pale brandy and mineral waters. He kept growling to himself that it was all dashed, blamed, and blanked nonsense and rubbish, and that everybody except himself had gone staring, howling mad, and that —that—He looked round to see that nobody was near, and raised his glass.

"Damme! He's a gentleman to the ultimate atom of his dashed backbone. A splendid fellow, begad! Here's to him—dashed young fool!"

The accelerated breakfast was despatched with an unreserved thoroughness and zest which proved that early hours, high spirits, emotional exercise, and an exhaustive preliminary canter on a tableful of promiscuous edibles in novel and even hazardous combinations, are excellent appetizers—occasionally.

Chapter IV

It was one of the newest and, unquestionably, the best locomotive of Mr Brady's Company that raced the Dublin Mail Express on that eventful morning.

It was a momentous and unforgettable ride for at least two—the younger two—of the passengers. Mr Brady, with pencil, watch, and notebook was making comparative tables of speed, places and distances. From time to time he made remarks indicative of his observations and computations, such as:

"H'm! Mail Express should now be round about So-and-So, so many miles out, so many miles off—reckoning at fifty-eight and two-thirds miles per hour, on average. We're doing about fifty-one!"

"We've over half-an-hour in hand and—h'm! gaining

somewhat. Gain will run off in watering and incidental losses: but we'll do, if we maintain our rate."

"H'm—yes! My figures are all right—proper allowances for relative distances and different times of starting. We've only got to keep her running—keep her running, at this pace."

Bryan, full of anxious thoughts and strung-up feelings scarce took his eyes from Mr Brady. He watched, dog-like, every motion, glance and expression of face, as if he controlled his fate.

Dion was buoyant, excited, interested, curious, sympathetic. He smoked a good deal and then went to sleep over one of his prospective father-in-law's newspapers.

That gentleman admired Sir Bryan's remarkable self-control. He saw clearly that beneath the enforced calm there was intense suspense, hope, fear, impatience: and he formed a high opinion of the young man's real strength of character.

"We're getting on," said he, almost pained at the strained eyes and the awful silence. "Barring accidents we shall be alongside nearly half-an-hour before the Postal tender, as I calculate it."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, Mr Brady," answered the Baronet, "but oh, if we should miss her—if there should be some mishap or impediment, or accident?"

"Ah, well, Bryan," said Mr Brady slowly and coolly, "I've thought of that, too—for everything is possible, especially the unforeseen. If we do miss the *Ormuzda*, we shall cable to friends in New York who will not lose sight of the young lady from the moment of her landing. You can follow by another ship the day after to-morrow."

Sir Bryan jumped up and pressed his hand.

"Shall I ever be able to thank you as I should for your

wonderful kindness to me! You have given me new life and hope."

"Ah," said Mr Brady, "that reminds me. Here are two or three letters of introduction to personal friends of mine in New York—all sound, influential people. They may be useful to you there should you require any advice, or help, or money. You see, you are young and inexperienced, and you will be in a strange city."

"You are indeed most thoughtful and kind. I shall never forget it."

At last they were in Queenstown; the Dublin Mail Express had not yet arrived, but was expected in about twenty minutes.

The bank manager had carried out his instructions. Mr Brady gave him his cheque for the money and the letter of credit which he had brought, and the party went on board the waiting launch and steamed out to the *Ormuzda*, alongside which she made fast, and the three gentlemen mounted the side of the great vessel.

"Well, if this isn't Mr Brady, now!" exclaimed a hearty voice belonging to a middle-aged lady, whose thin, oval face failed to prepare an observer for the massive shoulders and rotund opulencies of her sufficient figure.

"Ah, my dear Mrs Weeves, I'm delighted to see you. Crossing? I'm particularly glad. Excuse me a moment while I speak to the captain, and arrange about my young friend's passage. We shall return in a few minutes."

"This is particularly lucky," he remarked to his two companions. "She's a dear, good-hearted woman; widow of a one-time partner of mine. She'll be like a mother to you, Bryan; I'm sure of that."

Captain Allknott—severe, rigid and aloof as he was, especially at such a moment as the present—was, never-

theless, pleased to see Mr Brady and hear his explanation of his telegram and of Sir Bryan's position and objects.

The old man grinned and promised to look after the young fellow, who, as Mr Brady told him, didn't know the knave of clubs from the seven of diamonds, nor a bird of paradise from a rook with a painted tail, but was as high-minded and clean-hearted a gentleman as ever stepped from a three-decked novel into real everyday life.

"I'll see to him, Mr Brady; I'll put myself in your place. And I pity the gambler or shark who tries to steer or to scoop him. Quartermaster: ask the purser to be kind enough to come to me."

The purser, of course, made the usual difficulties; but everything ended with smiles all round; Bryan's luggage was installed in a cosy little state-room, and, what gratified him very much more, the presence of Gertrude Cole, spinster, was established as a passenger—in the steerage.

All agreed that the best plan was for Sir Bryan to go the voyage.

It was a striking compliment to Mr Brady, and evidence of old friendship and of present interest, that Captain Allknott descended for five minutes to his cabin to join in a bottle of champagne—the libation which Mr Brady insisted upon pouring on this remarkable occasion.

"Mail tender loading up, sir," reported an officer, and the Captain shook hands and went up to his bridge.

Mr Brady introduced the two young gentlemen to Mrs Weeves.

He whispered something in her ear, and she cried :—

"What, little Patsey! And now engaged to be married! Well, well! Sir, I congratulate you, with all my heart, and—and now that I look at you—I congratulate her also," and she seized Dion's hands and swung his arms as if at some quaint country dance.

Then she was told about Sir Bryan, and what had led to his being there now—a passenger to New York.

She was greatly charmed and interested, and straightway took charge of the proceedings and of the personages therein.

She was a wealthy widow, now childless, with much energy, shrewdness, and kindliness.

"I think—if I may say so—that it's a providential thing that you are here," said Mr Brady to her, apart. "Sir Bryan is utterly ignorant of the world; lost his mother in infancy, his father in boyhood, and his life, until now, has been a miserable, lonely, horrible victimisation. Be a mother to him, my dear Mrs Weeves. I have not seen this—this young lady. I hope that she is worthy of all this pure, exalted, knightly devotion."

Dion wrung Bryan's hands and bade him all sorts of good luck, and to come back soon. Mr Brady, too, took a warm farewell of him and of Mrs Weeves, and took off his hat to the Captain; and so, with much waving of hands and handkerchiefs, the little launch cast off, making room for the Mail tender.

By the time they stepped ashore the last letter bags had been put on board, and within a few minutes more, the *Ormuzda*, with her precious freightage of fate or fortune, started on her course across the ocean.

Bryan had never been to sea before—except when, as a child, he came from India; and he was uncomfortable and unhappy and ill for the first couple of days.

Mrs Weeves, who was a robust and undismayed sailor, and made the voyage several times every year, looked after him and nursed and cheered him with affectionate care and zeal.

She was also able to impart the delightful medicament of good news, for, as she told him, she had been visiting

the forward passengers several times daily, with little helps and comforts for the women and children. She had found Miss Cole—Gerty—who, she was evidently pleased to say, was not in the least sea-sick, but, on the contrary, brightened up all around her with her willing service and pleasant smile and sweet face.

"She has not the remotest suspicion of your being on board," said she. "Of course, I made not the slightest allusion or sign that I know anything. Only, I contrived, indirectly, to get out that she remained below from the moment she came on board until the vessel was actually under way. Sir Bryan—ah, well then, Bryan—she's a dear girl—so gentle, and pretty and good. Why, her soft, great eyes seem to show clear down to a heart like a child's—or an angel's. I'm all impatience to see you together, and—I've a spare berth in my state-room for her."

So she rattled on, supremely happy, busy and excited.

She had some friends on board—some whom she had known in America, some whom she had met in London or Paris, and some with whom she had forgathered since leaving Liverpool.

To these, during the first two days of the voyage, she had imparted bits of the idyll of which that ship was the theatre; but she maintained a wise and strict reserve as to the young lady, lest curiosity hurt the young people's feelings, or indiscretion mar the beauty and poetry of the play.

Every feminine bosom was in blissful effervescence, and each that owned a lord—or, at all events, a male person—unburdened itself with a more or less incorrect version of the story.

It was only on the third day that Sir Bryan was able to appear on deck with assurance and ease.

Mrs Weeves, who had a managing spirit, a mind for detail, and an eye for effect, saw to it that he should look his best.

She had sent to him the ship's barber, and she had inspired his sectional steward with a wholesome sentiment of his charge's importance, his own duties, and her potential liberality or—as the case might be—influence with the Board.

And, finally, she had herself seen to a few little touches, and when she, at length, walked in with him to breakfast, he was promptly voted as certainly handsome and distinguished, and, withal, modest and natural.

All the ladies regarded him with unfeigned, and even rapt, interest and admiration.

Mrs Weeves had formed a good many ingenious plots and plans for him—melodramatic, sensational, tender, triumphant: but he laughingly declined them all. He had the genius as well as the instinct of simplicity.

But he willingly accepted her advice and guidance—when once she abandoned her own little schemings.

"Wait until after their dinner-time," she counselled, referring to the steerage passengers. "The men will be gathering in groups and smoking or reading or playing draughts or cards; and the women will be dozing, or seeing to the children, or sewing, and chatting in little knots. She generally sits by herself—when not helping or reading to the others—mostly looking out at the sea—thinking, thinking—poor thing! I've watched her. Oh, don't sigh like that, my dear boy, it will all come right—perhaps, before the day is over."

"Oh, I hope so. How kind you are!"

"Now, don't be impatient, but just listen. You've got your sea-legs, and sea-appetite, and sea-looks now—but you mustn't rush these things.

"Heigho!"

"Oh, yes, I know. Well, I shall be going forward, as I do every day, with some fruit and sweets for the women and children, and books and so forth. You keep your eye on me—but pull your cap well over your face. I shall give you a signal—so—that nobody else will notice," she tied a piece of white tulle over her hat and under her chin. "When you see that, make your way down quietly amongst the men and work gradually to where she sits—generally, half-turned round, with her back to the ship and her wistful face on the water ahead. Now, come away and don't spoil everything by being seen first."

Mrs Weeves was forced to show herself stern and resolute as regarded the other anxious ladies in the secret. It was the moment for the strictest discipline.

It befell almost as designed by that clever manageress.

She would have dearly liked to play some more active part—such as preparing Miss Cole by the narration of a little story, a sort of parable, corresponding to the real inner facts as known to her alone, and then, at the crucial or propitious instant, Sir Bryan appears and she effaces herself in his embrace, and all is bliss.

But she very soon perceived that he was far too genuine and sincere for any display of a striking or theatrical nature: he was too real for even any semblance of unreality.

Gerty was sitting in the posture described by Mrs Weeves—a book on her lap, and her head, over which a coloured little shawl was tied, turned seawards.

It was with a beating, almost a leaping, heart that he found himself beside her.

"Gerty," he said, in a low tone.

She started violently, slowly turned her head, rose to her feet, and stared at him for an instant with wild, dilated eyes.

Then, with a half-stifled scream, she curved an arm round his neck, and he clasped her tightly and covered her face with kisses.

She quickly disengaged herself, sat down and, seeming to hold him off with her hands, burst into tears—a sort of wailing heart-broken crying, infinitely painful to behold.

The women sitting round about her, who had observed everything with their keen eyes, yet with the natural delicacy and respect of the lower-class Irish folk, at this point began to think that something was wrong and was calling for sympathy, support and the summary diligence of the strong and sudden right arm. They exchanged looks full of intelligence, resolve, and indignation; and the men scowled and said things to themselves and to each other. There was the growing feeling of pugnacity, heated by the unselfish passion of unreasoning partisanship, and fortified by the convictions of incorrect theory. It was the muttering of the gathering storm.

"Oh, why, why did you come?" moaned Gerty, wringing her hands almost despairingly. "I—I wanted to get away, for ever; to be as one dead to you—buried in the big new world away from you. And you followed me! Oh, why did you, why did you, why did you?"

"Aye," said a deep-bosomed motherly woman, unable to repress herself further—whilst the others closed round and approached, encouraging her with glances, nods and ejaculations—"Aye, sir—why did you? You have, as we can all see, brought the sorrow to the loving heart

of her, and darkened her young life. And now, when the poor crature is for struggling to shake free, and is flying for escape and peace and a new life, you come wid your good looks and your power o' money and your deludhering tongue! Oh, it's black and it's cruel, and it's meself will prevent ye and protect her, if I die for it, begorra! for it's the mother o' girls I am, meself."

"And so will we," cried a number of voices; and "Shame on him!" exclaimed others. Some of the men growled: "Overboard with him!"

Mrs Weeves, who had been keeping in the background, became so frightened at these hostile denunciations that she was on the point of rushing forward with an explanation; but she was reassured as she saw Sir Bryan's face.

He raised his hand to command silence and attention, and, with a pleasant smile, snswered the champion spokeswoman:

"Mother, and all you ladies, I hope you will help to prevent folly and to protect this dear girl—against herself. Nay, dear, I will tell them everything"—he took her hand which she left in his—"for if I can't persuade you, myself, they will, I am sure, advise you to listen to the voice of your own heart. Come nearer, all of you, and I will tell you, and you shall judge. And, more than that, you shall hear the story of the dearest and most self-sacrificing of all the dear women who have ever loved truly."

He sat down beside Gerty who averted her face, but did not withdraw her hand from his.

"No, no, no," she remonstrated.

"Ah, but I must, dear," said he firmly yet tenderly.

The steerage passengers—that is, those who were Irish,

for all others were unceremoniously elbowed out of the circle—sat and stood around, and the young man told them the tale in simple unaffected language.

"And," he was nearing the conclusion, "I followed next morning in a special train——"

"That's a train ordered special, all for himself, with only one carriage to it, and dhivil take everything else on the line. I know, for I've worked on the railway, bedad!" explained one of the men.

"Yes, that's so. A steamboat was kept ready—by telegraph—and brought me on board just about half an hour before this ship started. And then—ha, ha, ha! I was a couple of days before I got my sea-legs as they call it. And now here I am——"

"Yes, worse luck! But why? No good I'll go bail," said a gruff, stern-looking man.

"Ah, but, you shall hear. I told you how we parted, and how she broke her dead mother's ring, and we each kept a half—I've got mine now, next to my heart—and promised to be faithful and true to each other. And how I tramped to enlist in a certain Regiment, that my father had been an officer in; and how I suddenly came into a title and great, great wealth and property. And I want to tell you now that they are all nothing in the world to me, without her——"

She glanced up at him piteously, proudly, lovingly, appealingly.

"In my darkest time, when I was lonely, poor and wretched beyond words or even thought, she alone cheered me and loved me; and was sunshine and life to me. And now, because I've come to my own —name and wealth that neither of us dreamt of— she runs away! Is it because you no longer love me, dear?"

"Oh, no, no, Bryan," she sobbed. "You know that it is because—because I do."

"You darling! But you're a little goose all the same. Do you hear this, mother, and all of you? Because she loves me, she says, she runs away from me; out of the fulness and perfection of her love, because I'm rich and all that. Isn't that nonsense, now?"

"Oh, Bryan," she exclaimed turning her flushed face on him, "am I going to shame you or drag you down, and let people point, and smile, and say that your wife—my lady, Lady Portellis—was a housemaid, and washed down the front steps?"

He laughed heartily as he replied to this question—urged with such tragic passion and ending with such an anti-climax:

"Well, suppose they do? Didn't I clean the boots and knives, and carry up the coals, and wash the bottles, and eat broken victuals—when I got them? And I was worse still, for I had no wages at all, and no time out, and got to be ashamed to show myself because of the cast-off rags on me, and of my toes being through the discarded boots, sizes too broad for me — ha, ha, ha!"

"And you can laugh?" cried Gerty, splendid in her wrath. "Ah, the memory of it burns on my heart until I could almost upbraid the patient heavens, or call down the anger of God on them. For, think of it, oh, think of it —it was his own, his very own great house in St Stephen's Green, and all the fine furniture and all the grand pictures, and all the beautiful old silver, and everything, everything were all his, and the big money they were spending on their high living and fine clothes and carriages, all his: and he—starved and abused and stuck

into a garret! Ah, it was shameful and wicked! But they're found out now."

"Well, dear, that's all over, and the brighter day has come for you and me——"

"For you, dear—and I thank the good God from the core of my heart. But not for me——"

"Now, mother, isn't this unreasonable? Well then, Gerty, I go with you. I shall never go back to Ireland to claim either title or property or money. We can be as we were when we shared that broken ring between us, poor and happy, and together; for I can be a labourer or a policeman or a chemist's assistant, with the wife of my heart. I swear it by the sky above us and the sea around us, and by Him who made them!"

"Oh, hear him, honey, and be sensible," began the buxom matron. Then she plumped to her knees and on them waddled up to Sir Bryan, as if in penance or worship at a shrine, and kissed the edge of his blue serge jacket.

"Now, may all the saints in hiv'n bless your noble face and your heart o' gold! It's not for nothing that you're strong and fresh and grand like a glorious young morning —the Lord be praised for the mighty pains He took to make you an Irishman!"

These sentiments were endorsed by the audience with much poetic variety of expression and great fervour of accord.

Mrs Weeves here gently intervened with her fine tact.

"And all the ladies in the cabin are just dying to hug you, my dear," said she.

"Me, madam?" asked Gerty, surprised.

"Yes, just you, for I told them something about you two dear things, while he was lying ill in his cabin—what

with the sea-sickness and the nervous upset. Mr Brady gave me all the particulars. He is an old friend of mine——"

"It's Squire Brady," interposed the railway man, "he's a director of the railway company, and of the bank, and a magistrate and a great man entirely. I saw him come on board with the gentleman here."

"And his only daughter, Patricia, sent you all kinds of sweet messages, and a kiss. Here it is——" and Bryan promptly delivered it, and laughed like a boy. "And so did the Colonel's daughters and their mother, and——"

Gerty laughed as she fended him off from further conveyance of those special consignments; and the audience, throbbing with enthusiastic interest, shouted with merriment and did some step-dancing. Then, with quick change of mood, she stood up, as did he, gave him both her hands, and held up her grave rosy face, with the lustrous trustful eyes, to his.

He bent his head, and—in the presence of them all—the lips of these two loving simple creatures met in a long kiss. It was all plainly sealed and settled, and there were such ringing cries and West Country yells, and Erse exclamations — or quotations—and other shrill expositions of joy that the very stokers rushed up to know the reason.

"Will you throw me overboard now?" laughingly asked Sir Bryan.

"No, your honour," said the railwayman, "but, begorra! we'll heave out the man what said it. Show him to me."

"Indeed, you will do nothing of the kind. I want to shake hands with him, for he spoke from honest indignation at what he thought was wrong. And I want to

thank you all from my heart—all you, countrymen and countrywomen of my own—for your kindly sympathy for my wife as she will shortly be, and for me."

"Long loife to the dear pair of ye!" answered a chorus of voices.

"I want one of you men to make me a list of every man, woman and child among you who is Irish. I want everyone of them to have a little keepsake from us. And, meanwhile, your steward shall have a shilling a day for everyone of you, babies and all, for such little extras or comforts as you may prefer and that the ship can supply."

There was laughter and outcries of pleasure and gratitude: but without the fine free zest, and abandonment of disinterested satisfaction, which had characterised their previous applause.

"You will share my cabin, dear," said Mrs Weeves, "I have a spare berth in it. And—look here, friends—I'm going, right here and now, to engage that self-same cabin for the voyage home, and I'm going to be as a mother to her, until she becomes Sir Bryan's wife in his own country. I have no children of my own—now; and Mr Brady was a partner once of my dear husband. Now, that's fixed up clear, I reckon. Come, dear."

There was some difficulty, however, about this point of changing her quarters. It was not until Bryan had said that he would move to the steerage if she persisted in remaining there, and on the impressive advice of the soft-hearted and massive lady who had first led the attack on her behalf, that she at last consented—but on the condition that she should effect the removal during the saloon dinner hour.

That evening Mrs Weeves and Gerty, attended by the former's maid, dined in that lady's cabin.

A ship at sea, like a cathedral close, is a whispering gallery.

When, next morning, Mrs Weeves entered the saloon with Gerty under her portly wing, Sir Bryan following, every lady and gentleman at the crowded breakfast tables, rose and bowed.

"That's for you, dear," whispered Mrs Weeves.

Gerty, blushing, palpitating, surprised, cast down her eyes, and, with just one half dismayed, half happy glance at her lover, crept yet closer to her stately guide, and with bent head, timidly and modestly proceeded to her seat at the Captain's table.

Only when she was seated did the other passangers, who had so signally honoured her, resume their places and repast.

The women as well as the men were charmed with her. She looked so winsome, so natural and graceful; and, certainly, she was very pretty.

Mrs Weeves had not been able to persuade her to accept or borrow a trinket, a ribbon, a bit of lace, or anything else from her abundant store. Gerty wore only her own plain things, and so becoming were they that not a few ladies discarded much extraneous adornment in the way of jewellery and flying ends, in artistic imitation of her.

* * * * * *

The *Ormuzda* had made her home voyage, and Mrs Weeves and Gerty were at Brady Castle. Sir Bryan had come back by another boat.

The few days in New York were utilised by him in sightseeing and in endowing all the Irish fellow-passengers of the steerage—men, women and children—with twenty-five dollars each.

The two ladies had shopped.

Gerty had declined, with rigid firmness, all suggestion

of money from Mrs Weeves and even from her affianced husband.

"Sure," she said, "haven't I money of my own, for any dresses or things I want? I have nearly thirteen pounds yet."

It is to be feared that Mrs Weeves used some sophistications as to the relative values of American and British currency; for Gerty was delighted and surprised at the quantity and quality of her purchases, and the small inroads which they made on her money. She was proud of her independence, and Mrs Weeves was serenely satisfied with her generalship which left the payment of the odd cents only to the unsuspecting girl whilst she surreptitiously defrayed the dollars.

A pretty ring and a jewel or two were all that she would take from Bryan.

Mrs Brady was rejoiced to have her old friend, Mrs Weeves, in her house. Her presence was a veritable nerve tonic.

Patricia, Valentina, Geraldine, and the other O'Flaherty and Byrne girls were overjoyed to find Gerty not only a beautiful and amiable girl but also well-bred and well educated, with an agreeable contralto voice, which had been trained by one of the Sisters who had a great liking for her and had bestowed especial pains on her culture. That good lady's sudden death frustrated her intentions for her favourite's future; and thus it was that she had entered Dr Coyninge's service as a sort of nursery governess and, when the younger girls went to a school, she had remained as a parlour and housemaid on her sister's advice. For situations were difficult to obtain, and service in a doctor's house was a kind of distinction: and Gerty would not be a dependent on her sister.

And now, in the unrestrained tide of her great happiness, the brightness and gaiety of her true nature came out, and she and her young friends, who liked her more every day, and who could not pet her enough, were like birds in springtime—full of love and song and the joy of life.

Mrs Weeves, Mrs Brady, Gerty and Patricia—and, most potently, the latter, as a matter of course—had persuaded Mr Brady to take them to London and Paris for the selection of the two young ladies' bridal equipments and adornments, and Valentina was going, too, to that sedate young lady's unbounded delight. Bryan and Dion would join them in London.

"I'm mother, you know, dear," said Mrs Weeves, "and you must not contradict. I know that the dear boy has made most generous settlements, and put a lot of money in your name. That you can use by and bye. But, at present, I'm mother, and you must not contradict me: and I've plenty, plenty, and it does my heart good to find my child's marriage fixings as if she were a princess. And, indeed, it's a prince of a boy you're going to marry, my love."

Gerty's sister, Mrs Versey, was soberly, unspeakably happy as she folded her to her breast and kissed and blessed her, as she used to do years ago. She brought a melancholy story from Dublin. Dr Coyninge had absconded, and his wife and the two younger girls were living in humble lodgings. The eldest, Olivia—hadn't she heard? She was dead: overdose of chloral, so it was said at the inquest. Poor thing! Gerty cried a good deal.

She did not know of the letter which her lover received, along with Versey's enclosing her own, on that eventful evening before he raced the Mail Express, and

which he had thrust unread into the pocket of his dinner-jacket.

That letter, which he found when on board the *Ormuzda*, was a sad farewell from the unfortunate Olivia. It was a pitiful letter. She expressed her shame at what she had only now discovered of the terrible wrongs inflicted on him in connection with his father's Will and his property and rights; her bitter regrets for the slights that she, herself, had seemed to put upon him—at first, from sheer want of thought, and, later, in the desire and effort to combat her real love for him, for, indeed, she did truly love him, but had to crush it down, believing, then, what she had been told about him. And she could say it all now, for the first and last time, as she would be beyond all mortal reproach when he would read it. She prayed for his forgiveness and, now and then, a kindly thought. She hoped that he would be happy—with her whose pure and unselfish love deserved its reward, for she was a thousand times better than the hapless writer who now bade him everlasting farewell.

The young man was inexpressibly shocked and grieved. When his thoughts became calmer he wrote to Mr Versey to enquire discreetly as to the circumstances in which Mrs Coyninge and her daughters were left. In the result, she was informed by a Dublin solicitor that he was instructed to pay her a hundred pounds yearly, in monthly instalments.

She vainly pressed for the benefactor's name, but she guessed it—though the welcome and almost vital income failed to mitigate her furious resentment against "that young minx."

* * * * *

That Young Minx

Brady Castle fairly hummed with the mirth and excitement of the wedding preparations; O'Flaherty Hall whirled in unison; and the daughters of these houses and the Byrne girls were aglow over their bridesmaids' dresses and jewels. Of course, Dion was to be the best man and Major Murphison and some other officers, out of respect for the father's memory, the groomsmen.

A tranquil group sat one evening smoking in the billiard-room, silent and satisfied, as men are with a good cigar in congenial company, and after a good dinner.

"She's a jewel, sir," said the Major. "Chestnut hair, hazel eyes — sweet and nutty altogether. And such a delicious speech, and a heart like a child's, and a form like a nymph, bedad!"

Someone made an allusion to the once famous shootings at Portellis Castle. Sir Bryan laughed, and said:

"And, except for what little I learnt when I was a soldier, I can't shoot, and never killed a thing. And I never rode or drove a horse; and, I do confess to you, I shall feel quite shy and awkward when we come home there after our month or two abroad. And, as to having friends or guests—but Mrs Weeves will help us as to that."

"Well, Sir Bryan," remarked the Major with cheerful earnestness, "I only wish I had half the chance to indoctrinate you, all by our two selves, in all those little arts, artifices, and more or less useless accomplishments of which you spoke, and a few others necessary to the graceful spending of a large income and the doing of what's expected in that station of life."

"Why, my dear Major, I shall be most truly delighted if you'll come and stay——"

"Ah, but," the Major's mellow laugh and droll eye were very pleasant, "there'll be somebody else that will have the right to a whole-hearted voice and vote in that regard——"

"All right," answered Bryan confidently, "I'll ask her: that will be all right, I know."

"And, by the Sacred Bull! if I've the chance to kill off your agent—decorously and unobtrusively—and take his place, faith! and it would be the height of luck for me——"

"And for Bryan and all of us," shouted Dion, and there was general applause.

The Major's jokes were always rollicking; but the shaft was often winged with a worldly pinion.

Then the ladies came in and sat around, and the conversation became general, discursive, gay, and inconsequential.

In the course of a lull, Mr Brady observed to Gerty:

"And you're going to be a Protestant, my dear, like Bryan and the rest of us here! But love is not a theologian, we all know."

"Ah, but he is, though, Mr Brady. That's why I'm taking my husband's religion."

They looked at her, somewhat puzzled, and the Colonel, being English and slower-witted, asked:

"How is that? I don't quite see——"

Gerty raised her great eyes, and said, in her low rich tones:

"I do not marry Bryan only until death shall part us. Would I be separated from him after we are dead? Ah, no. So that's why I am of his religion—right or wrong."

"You darling!" cried Mrs O'Flaherty, crossing over to kiss her, and all the girls rushed at her and hugged her.

The men rose and drank her health uproariously.

* * * * *

"To think," wildly and venomously reflected Mrs Coyninge at the same instant of time, "that the rich and happy Lady Portellis should be no other than my housemaid—my dismissed servant! It is simply maddening—maddening. That young minx!"

Chose Jugée

Everybody knows M'Slogan's Engineering Works at Nogginside, with their rambling sheds and yards, the wharves and chimneys, the noises, ugliness and obvious utility.

Everybody, too, is aware that Mr M'Slogan was one of the most substantial, useful and unloved men in Ballynoggin, for he had lived over forty years in the town.

He was one of the Rev. Dr M'Donner's Elders, had been twice Mayor, and he also was a Commissioner and a Magistrate.

In other respects, he was a cold old man, hard and hale, with a glacial eye, and a severely-uncertain temper.

One of his foremen was named Sheenan—a staid, middle-aged man, member of the same church, reliable, and of methodical habits. He was not a Scotchman but was almost as unlikeable, because he came from the North, had a serious mind and a wife who was a teetotaler.

This last fact explains the undeviating regularity with which he found himself, at precisely a quarter past six on each week day evening, at Donovan's grocery, where he soberly took his bottle of stout, smoked two pipes, cooled off with a single glass of whiskey, and then went doucely home.

One particular spot—a corner-seat by the little counter, which was at a right angle to the general shop counter,

and faced the window at the back—was, from usage, tacitly dedicated to him at about that hour. No townsman would dream of then occupying it, and a stranger would be warned, or bumped out of it on the stroke of six.

It happened on a certain evening that Sheenan did not turn up as usual. His absence, however, gave rise to no anxiety or surprise, for one of the workmen explained, whilst ineffectually endeavouring to slake his own thirst, that Sheenan was detained in the pattern-room and, if late, would probably go straight home, poor fellow!

So, for once, but quite unthinkingly, he slid or edged into Sheenan's corner, what time they talked of the absent as a rale dacent man, under the double calamity of a mistaken piety and a non-alcoholic wife.

Then Patsy Flynn came in and walked up to the high-backed bench at the drinking part of the grocery. He saw a rough felt hat such as Sheenan wore habitually, presumed that that person's head was in it, and gave it such a mighty thwack with a thick blackthorn stick that he almost reeled with the recoil.

His victim fell in a heap, gory and senseless but—both parents having been Celtic—alive.

There was much commotion; the man was brought to; and the general sympathy was, of course, transferred to Flynn when he explained that it was quite an innocent mistake, for it was Sheenan's head he had meant to break and not this man's at all, at all.

There could be no possible question of the police under these unforeseen circumstances.

Besides, the men who took the astonished victim to a surgery and, afterwards, to his home, impressed upon him that Flynn was good for damages and costs, and that it would be more profitable and diverting to take

the law on him than unsatisfying criminal proceedings for assault, of no good to himself, and of no great harm to Flynn, who would be sure to have friends on the jury and get witnesses enough to make him out as the original sufferer and not the aggressor.

Flynn, too, was chagrined and disappointed. This was but natural, and was duly appreciated by the people around.

One need not have all the keen zest and sportsmanlike instincts of the Irish to feel with any man who, from no fault or miscalculation of his own, makes a bad miss—whether it be over a wall, or a shot, or a favourite stroke, or an adroit move, or a cherished finesse. The revulsion is as deadening as tepid punch, or venial sin, or a good joke told to an Englishman.

Flynn experienced a yet more exquisite pang, for he had panted for a little wild justice in respect of some scrap metal which he was in the habit of buying from the Works.

Sheenan had not only objected to some hundredweights of old copper being mixed up and reckoned as iron, but he had also proved obdurate and foolish concerning the half-sovereign which Flynn had vainly tried to press into his hard and incorruptible hand.

Flynn felt hurt. He had prided himself on being an excellent judge of men and things, for he bought all that came in his way—anchors, bracelets, wrecks, books, old rope, clocks, pictures, bedding, building materials, foremen, stewards, military and other store-keepers, anything and anybody, except only the Police and the Clergy of all denominations.

But, when he was drunk, he was apt to forget that he had shares in banks and railways, and that he held the bills and bonds of better men.

Then it was that he got down to primary principles and hit out with a stick like a man without investments.

He received in due course the County Court summons claiming damages for the assault, compensation for loss of wages, doctor's bills, etc.

An Irishman dearly loves litigation. He goes about it with a fearful joy and thoroughness, and all his kin and clan and neighbours throb with him in the delicious excitements; the very lawyers affect an air of personal interest and enjoyment, like hounds at a coursing match.

Naturally, both plaintiff and defendant had each his eager attorney. What self-respecting man could fall short in such an essential? There is not a true man in Ireland who would not cheerfully give his attorney a guinea in order that he might prove that he was absolutely unable to pay five shillings.

After much microscopic flaw-picking, violent attempts to riddle each other with ingenious objections and demands, and other preliminary skirmishing of a highly clever and useless character, the case came on for hearing.

There was a good deal of fierce chaff, which sounded like abuse, at the plaintiff; derision was poured on his tale of injuries; obloquy heaped on his doctor; and a torrent of eloquent declamation hinted that the defendant was the subject of a malevolent conspiracy.

In course of time there was a condescension to the claim and it was contended that—even if Flynn did hit the plaintiff, which he denied; and even if the latter were injured, which was not admitted; and even if the injuries were authentic and not old ones merely touched up by the accidental tap on the head in question, which was strenuously urged—it was all a simple misunderstanding.

Witnesses were called to prove that the defendant was

not even on speaking, much less on fighting terms with the plaintiff, and, in fact, did not even know him; and that the entire incident was due to the singular failure of the man Sheenan to be in his usual place on that particular evening, as Mr Flynn had every right, reason and presumption to expect him to be.

The plaintiff's attorney, on being asked by the Judge what he had to say to this point, said that he did not contest it, so far as it went; but that it did not affect his client's rights.

"Who said that it did?" snapped the Judge. "What I have to consider is—Who is, or who should be, the real defendant in this matter? I say, it is the man Sheenan, and I order that he be added to the suit. I give leave to amend, and adjourn the case until Thursday."

Mr Flynn was rather puzzled until it was explained to him that whatever might be adjudged against him he could, by the same judgment, recover from the further, or added, defendant; so that he was now all right, happen what might.

The plaintiff's attorney was also delighted, for, as he told his client, it did not matter who paid, so long as he won; and the more defendants the better, for the extra fun and fighting was at the other's expense.

Mr Sheenan was much surprised when served with process, and, of course, he promptly engaged an attorney.

The Judge and also the advocates for the plaintiff and Flynn were very hard and sharp with Sheenan; but his lawyer, who fought splendidly, at length managed to establish that it was by no fault or premeditation of his own that he was absent from his customary place at Donovan's grocery on that fateful evening.

He explained to the intent Court and audience that

Sheenan had been ordered by his master, Mr M'Slogan, to stay beyond his ordinary time, as the man in charge of the pattern room had got leave at noon that day, and some things had to be searched out at once, so as to be ready for some castings on the next morning.

The three attorneys, hoarse but exhilarated, looked at the Judge.

"My course is perfectly clear," said his Honour. "Add Mr M'Slogan as a further defendant. You can amend, and the case is adjourned to this day week."

Mr M'Slogan happened to be in London. His principal clerk—Mr D'Arcy Fitzclarence de Voysey, a relation of his wife's—mentioned, in a postscript to a long letter about a variety of matters, that he had received a County Court summons which, so far as he could make out, arose out of Sheenan's detention on a certain day; and asking what he was to do about it.

The instruction was very simple: "Look into the thing. If the claim is wrong see Kennada about it. If you are satisfied that it is right, see to it yourself. Dismiss Sheenan."

The clerk was a precise and dignified old fellow. He went most painstakingly into the matter, carefully questioned the time-keeper and others, made lengthy notes and extracts from time and pay-sheets, and saw the three attorneys with whom he exchanged views.

When the case came, for the third time, before the Court, Mr D'Arcy F. de Voysey stepped forward and, with a bland but respectful smile, a heightened colour and several courtly bows, told his Honour that Mr M'Slogan was still detained in London, and that he, himself, had, as directed, looked fully into the matter and was not in a position to contravene the fact of the man Sheenan's

detention on the occasion referred to in the—ahem!—the document in his hands.

Then he coughed elegantly, bowed again to the Court, to all the attorneys, the Clerk and the Usher, and backed out in a stately way as if he were leaving the Lord Lieutenant's presence: and everybody in the Court felt vaguely improved and elevated, as if they had all participated in some grand ceremonial.

Mr M'Slogan, as has been stated, was a personality in Ballynoggin, and by far the largest employer of labour for many miles around. This was why the chief Bailiff himself waited upon him one day for payment of the judgment debt and the three sets of costs—the whole now amounting to a serious sum—for such a case.

It is written that Mr M'Slogan was a man of few words and of frigid demeanour.

But it now seemed that he had only been pent up and dammed back for the past half century or so.

For never was there such an outburst of, or by, a man. It was cyclonic, titanic, catastrophic. The chief Bailiff was frightened.

Mr D'Arcy de Vosey floated into the room, very white and looking more than ever like a habited bone with a rabbit's brain.

Mr M'Slogan roared for a messenger to take a note, which he wrote with his own hand, to Sheenan: he read it out to Mr de Voysey.

He therein expressed his personal regret that through the deed of an idiot he had been made to act like a rascal; bade him come back to his post, and to accept the cheque enclosed—being for double the amount of the back wages.

Then he turned darkly to the Bailiff and broke forth terribly against Judge, lawyers and officials, and vowed

that he would go straight to Dublin and lay everything before the Law Officers of the Crown.

"Yes, sir. Just so, sir," said the chief Bailiff deferentially. "But you'll pay the trifling amount first, sir, of course."

"Pay, you grinning gommeril! Look here, if you dare to trespass here or to bother me, I shall smash you, and the whole lunatic gang of you, like a rotten caskhoop."

Then, more horrifying far than his anger, he went into peal upon peal of wild laughter, as the strange absurdity of the whole thing came before him.

He had not so laughed since he was a boy. He got up, stamped with his feet, held his head, slapped his knees until, at length — purple, breathless and with streaming eyes — he sank back into his great leather chair and panted.

The Bailiff felt better and had the courage to seize his opportunity.

"Ah, I thought, sir, that you would see the folly in a manner of speaking, sir——" said he.

"See the folly of it," thundered Mr M'Slogan. "Folly! That's not the word for the most insane, upside-down, ultra daft set of proceedings ever dreamt of out of an asylum, or a nightmare, or Ireland. Ho, Ho!"

"Just so, Mr M'Slogan," softly said the chief Bailiff. "Just so, sir. The idea of your exciting yourself over a trifle like this! What's a trumpery matter of £48, 4s. 10d. to you, sir? As I was saying to Mr ——"

"Eh?"

"Oh, the items, sir? Certainly, sir——" said the official. "Plaintiff's damages and doctor's fees, £3, 7s. 6d.; then his costs, Mr Flynn's, and——"

"Man! you're an imbecile—a stark, miserable imbecile.

I, pay? Ho, Ho! And yet there he sits, expecting to have to give me a receipt—the benighted muddle-headed creature! Eh, man! Just open your ears, or take a double knot in them, and let me expound to you what blithering, blundering calves and asses and haddocks and blind loons you all are."

"Yes, Mr M'Slogan," said the Bailiff pleasantly. He felt sure that he would get his money in the end, so he did not mind this bit of futile fight. It was sport, anyway.

"Listen, man alive, and maybe Heaven will let a glimmer of clear practical sense get into the Egyptian darkness of your clever, illogical, wrong-headed skulls."

"You are very likely right about us, sir," said the Bailiff meekly but cunningly—adding to himself:

"Let him go on. I'll humour him: he's blowing off now, and he'll end by talking himself into a good temper, and then I'll tap him for the cheque; and sure, it's all right."

"Now, observe," cried M'Slogan, more calmly, refreshed by some resounding pinches of snuff. "This fellow, this ruffian Flynn assaults a man——"

"Yes, sir, but it was a misunderstanding, a mistake——"

"A mistake! Was the cracked head, and the danger to life, and the pain—was not all that real?"

"Oh, as to that, sir—yes. But it was all explained quite satisfactorily."

"Man—man—is an assault like that against the law or is it not?" furiously demanded Mr M'Slogan.

"Well, sir," twisted the Bailiff, "the intent——"

"Was it the intent to hurt somebody?"

"Yes—but he was not there, you see," replied the Bailiff triumphantly.

"You're hopeless, hopeless," groaned Mr M'Slogan. "Answer me this: Is Sheenan to be punished for not being there to drink porter on that day? And by what law?"

"Well, sir, you see Mr Flynn thought he'd be there and so——"

"And so Flynn, the assaulter, is to go free and scathless, and Sheenan is to pay all—even Flynn's costs?"

"Yes, Mr M'Slogan; it seems all right, sir. And now you——"

"Yes: now it's I. I am called on to pay because I ask a workman of mine to overstay his time, a little. In consequence of which he is not drinking at a particular place at a particular time. In consequence of which a law-breaker, who had not even an appointment with him, assaults another man in his place. Is that the chain of reasoning?"

"Sir," answered the chief Bailiff with sincere admiration. "You've got it as nate and clare as a string of beads. The Judge himself didn't state it half so clarely and convincingly. I knew it was joking you were all the time, and meant to give me your cheque——"

"Get out of my office, you unregenerate, past-cursing and past-redeeming villain! You thickhead, you crackpate, out! Good Lord! Am I awake, or is this only a ghastly drunken deevil's ravings?"

After a few moments' interval, the chief Bailiff came back from behind the office door which he had only partly closed when he dived out.

"Mr M'Slogan, sir," he said, keeping a watchful eye on that gentleman, as well as on his means of retreat, "I think, sir, I can see a way out of this. Surely, now, we may find somebody against whom you may seek recourse, and so shift the liability on. If you could give me the

name of the customer for whom you wanted those patterns, now——"

"Oh!" cried Mr M'Slogan, almost dancing with rage, "what would that holy man Job have done if he'd been tried like this? I shall fall from grace if this abandoned haverer remains another instant in my presence. Get out, ye scoondrel! and if I hear any more about this mad business I shall have everyone of you—from the fool of a Judge to the tool of a process-server—dismissed, and make you the laughing-stock of the country, if it costs me ten thousand pounds."

He never did hear any more about the matter, for he was not a man to be exasperated into hostile action.

But the chief Bailiff found out that the pattern-room keeper's absence on the day of the assault was owing to his attending a sale of some boats and other things belonging to a widow whom he was courting; and he made *her* pay the lot.

So justice was done, and everybody was quite satisfied.

The "Tre Falti"

A Rigmarole Story

Chapter I

BALLYNOGGIN had an additional grievance of an exclusive and consoling character. It was that Government always treated the town with meanness, rapacity and hostility. The latter influence was, of course, due to the traditional jealousy of Irish commercial progress, and the natural English tendency to neutralize the bounties of Providence in Ireland.

For Ballynoggin unquestionably possessed every feature and requisite that goes to the making of a splendid harbour, and, from its position, a great emporium.

Successive Governments had been coaxed, argued or bullied into the grant of large advances, upon easy terms.

The results were wharves without water, warehouses without access, and docks without shelter. For the recommendations of the State engineers had been overborne by the vehement clamour of the Party in Parliament, and by excited deputations bearing tumultuous local resolutions and petitions to Dublin and London.

The harbour works were, therefore, constructed at the mouth of the Noggin, south of the town, instead of utilizing the little lough on the north side, which ran inland some miles to Baleila at its head, and was protected

by a superb natural breakwater, and had a deep channel and good anchorage.

So it came to pass that the official harbour was a dead failure. The jetties constructed by Mr M'Slogan and by the Railway Company served, by tacit recognitions and small tolls, for any trade that went on at that end.

The north end became, in an irregular sort of way, the real harbour. There was plenty of water and safe riding within a few hundred yards from the beach and in the little lough, or Monks' Creek; with easy facilities for rowing boats to and fro.

Business accommodated itself, as it always does. There were public-houses, sail lofts, ships' chandleries, carpenters' shops, smithies, outfitters, many houses, huts and sheds, a police station, a mission hall, and a rope-walk.

The favourite landing-place was a roughly-camp-shedded little cove in the grounds of the Harp Inn, which was some two or three furlongs from the Creek.

The grievance referred to was that the rate of interest, on the State advances of over half a million sterling, had not been still further reduced to one per cent. only.

Yielding to importunity, pressure and parliamentary reasons the repayment of principal had been waived. Then the arrears of interest had been forgiven. Then the interest had been reduced again and again on fervid promises of regular payment in the future, until it now stood at two per cent. only.

Ballynoggin denounced the callous avarice and grinding cruelty of a sinful two per cent. rate. She felt crushed, discouraged and thwarted. By no method of mortal reasoning, she argued passionately, should any self-respecting, God-fearing State ask more than one per cent. —or expect even that to be paid.

Of course, not a single penny had ever been paid in respect of either principal or interest; and it was not within the remotest notion of anyone—except the dour and mechanical-minded Scotch amongst them—to pay a farthing, even if the interest were attenuated to the most shadowy fraction of the one per cent. that they contended for.

"Then, if you don't pay, and never mean to pay anything, what earthly difference does it make what the nominal rate is?" asked an unimaginative English yachtsman one day of a leading citizen.

"Why, as to not paying, that's all roight. Dhivil a sixpence will we ever pay. But it's the principle of the thing, don't ye see? There's places which sit under one per cent.—and don't be paying that same, of course—and why should we be treated in this grasping, shameful and murdhering manner? Answer me that, sorr. It's the blighting invidiousness that makes the infamy of it."

"But you wouldn't pay even then——"

"Of course, we should not. Why should we? England's rich enough, and owes us enough; and look at the ghastly mistakes that have been made."

"Yes, but your people would have it so——"

"Ah, sure, the Government shouldn't have minded us at all. We're all woild-hidded and loose-tongued, ye know. Sure, what's the use of Government at all if it doesn't know better than we ignorant shouting creatures?"

"So, if the Government had resisted——"

"Begorra, thin, an' we should have turned them out—as we could, just then; and, maybe, got more from the other fellows."

* * * * *

This brief preface is, more or less, necessary in order

to understand better the incidents which follow, and which happened before the Great Slither of the Sowback Bog on the right bank of the Noggin, which may have an important bearing on the future of the town. Possibly, that event may be hereafter treated of in these chronicles.

* * * * *

Amongst the craft anchored off the Harp Inn and Monks' Creek was a Scotch fishing smack and an Italian barque—small and old but stout. The Creek itself, being an excellent natural dock, was lumbered up with some old hulks, used occasionally for storing ice; a broken-down schooner believed to be in litigation, or to have been forgotten; a dredger which had never worked, as some parts were missing and had never been found or replaced; part of a wreck, which it was nobody's business to buy, sell or remove; and some barges originally intended to wait on the dredger, but now used by naughty boys to dive from, when they could get a boat wherewith to board them.

A couple of the Scotchmen had rowed ashore on some message or another. They had read into their orders a permission to visit the Harp, for when they came out they showed that they had drunk a good deal in a short time, for economy must exhibit itself somehow.

Just then three of the Italian sailors, evidently a mate and a couple of seamen, came bustling down to their boat, each carrying something. They had apparently been buying some small stores and provisions, for it was known that the barque had taken in its cargo—hundreds of barrels of herring and great stacks of dry fish—and was now getting ready for return to Palermo.

The Italian mate had left his coat in the boat, and his neck-band was loose as he went quickly backwards and

forwards bearing things to the boat, and giving vivacious orders to his companions.

Against him lurched one of the Scotch fishermen, thick-clothed, heavy-booted, loud, brutal.

"See yon, Geordie," cried he. "Look at the foreigner —with earrings, and eyes shining like a bird's. Ha, ha— the pagan idolator!"—and he snatched at the scapulary which was exposed on the Sicilian's swarthy breast.

In the twinkling of an eye the latter had dropped what he was holding, and had stabbed the other to the heart— leaving the knife or dagger in the wound.

Then, before the people who were standing about had recovered from their stupor, he took to his heels and ran like a deer towards the Creek.

Pursuit began: men tumbled out of public-houses, workshops and other places, and shouted as they ran: and the rope-makers left their work and joined in the chase.

Larry and Mike were ferreting on the opposite side of the Creek—about half a mile broad at that point—along with old Nicky Joyce the lobster-man, the sole inhabitant, with his family, of that rugged little promontory—when they heard the wild yells on the town bank.

They saw a coatless man rushing along, easily ahead of his pursuers—for he was slight, sober, and born and bred a mountaineer. Then, just as he came to the turn of the road, as it curved towards Baleila, he seemed to swerve, turn, and dash boldly into the Creek, now high in tide almost to dead water.

The fugitive had nearly run into some carts coming town-way: that was why he had deflected his course. In another minute or two, the carters had mingled with the others on the high bank of the Creek, looking at the swimmer.

"Poor fellow!" said Mike. "I don't know who he is or what he's done—but we're bound to help him, anyway."

"Of course, Mike," assented Larry.

"Stoop," counselled Nicky. "Don't let them see us. They haven't yet, I know, for the grey patchy rock and dark scrub about here will hide any number staring straight acrost. Let's crape along by that dyke to the bluff yonder. The land takes a twist, and there's turns and loops of water and shore where we may lie and look out, and, maybe, lend a hand."

They followed him, and soon found a position of concealment, as well as a base of possible action.

"Besides," remarked Mike, "we've now got the ice-hulks between us. I fancy the beggar will make a half-way house of them, or the barges, or the wreck, and then start again. Do you see him, now?"

No: he was not in view. They watched with much anxiety, and they speculated keenly as to what it might all mean, for it was such an extraordinary thing for the public to try and hunt down a criminal. What could he have done? Was he an informer; or a man who had dared to tell the truth in the witness-box; or a renegade who had had the hardihood to say openly of the majority of the political agitators what most people thought secretly? What atrocity could he have committed?

But, he was now hunted to the death; had pluckily taken to the water; and they had got to help him, whether in spite of his virtues or in consequence of his crimes did not matter in the least.

"Away wid ye, Nicky," said Mike, "and bring a blanket. I've got a bottle on me. He'll be perished and parched wid the cold and wet—if he do be landing at all. And faith! I'm minded to shwim out an' help

him in — if he's not been carried away or gone undher."

"I've thought of that, too," remarked Larry; "but he'd maybe take us as being after him and drown or struggle——"

"Lave it to me, sorr," said Nicky. "I'll be back in a jiffy. You, Mike, give an oye to the dogs and ferrets. Just tell Terry to kape 'em going."

The older man and the young one ran off with equal celerity.

Terry was a son of Joyce's.

Nicky soon reappeared with a bundle on his arm, followed by another son—a handsome, breezy lad of about fifteen—carrying a huge wicker lobster-pot.

The boy was out of his two or three items of raiment and in the water, within thirty seconds, swimming at a grand pace towards the hulks, a thin line tied to one arm. He soon arrived at the moored craft, and was observed swimming about amongst them, but carefully shielding himself from the view of the other side.

His father and the two young fellows watched him silently, almost breathlessly: and, at length, they had the satisfaction of seeing his white upraised arm, as a signal that he had found.

There was then some little delay, but the object of the towed cord was now apparent, for the wicker frame was being hauled towards one of the barges to which two figures were seen holding—the boy and the fugitive.

Then the little procession moved shorewards—the lad's dark head almost invisible, and the man completely masked in the great basket, the shore-line to which was operated by Nicky. The boy—young Nicky—was cleverly giving to the lobster-pot an erratic irresponsible drifting course. He had, at a glance, noted the state of the tide;

he had, therefore, worked up so far as he could, under the shelter of the ragged line of boats and barges, that so it might, on turning, seem to be carried down, in a natural way, with the other miscellaneous objects a-wash on the ebb.

And, at the very worst, there was nothing unlikely in the notion that Nicky Joyce should take proper precautions in case any part of his plant got a-foul.

Young Nicky jumped up in the little cove behind the inbending bluff, rosy, steaming, and amused.

"Brought yez a quare fish, sorrs," laughed he.

The three men extracted the hunted one, and Mike promptly clapped his bottle to the poor fellow's lips and almost forced some spirits down his throat.

With chattering teeth, spluttering tongue, and clasped hands, the man threw himself on his knees and began a hurried entreaty, in Italian.

All this was very singular and surprising, but amazement followed when Larry was heard speaking to the sailor in his own tongue.

The man seized and kissed his hands, and poured out a torrent of words.

On a sign from Larry, who smilingly reassured the trembling wretch, Mike quickly stripped off the saturated clothes, rubbed him dry, and wrapped him in the blanket. Young Nicky trotted off to the sheiling fire with the wet things.

Larry in a few words told his friends the story of the stabbing affray, as confessed by Gaspardo—that was the man's name—and what had led up to it.

"By the hiv'ns, thin," exclaimed Nicky, "an' it was difinding our howly religion he was, which the prisbyterin blagyard was afther insultin'! Now he's twice welcome by that same token, begorra!"

Mike felt a passing shade of disappointment. He would have preferred a less justifiable homicide to succour, help and comfort.

But the brief despondency went off and he patted Gaspardo on the back.

"Nicky," said Larry, who could be thoughtful and alert on occasion, "quick: bring me your razor and scissors, and if you've any spare clothes, and shoes, let's have them. I'll pay for them. We must alter his appearance—and hide him, besides. Sure, you've a dozen spots snug and close."

Mike looked at him with great admiration.

In a very short time Gaspardo's abundant locks had been sheared short, his blackavised face cleared down to a simple small moustache, the earrings taken from his ears —one and all declined the proffered gift of them—and the holes doctored flush with the lobes with an improvised paste of breadcrumb and tobacco juice. A further transformation was effected by the insertion of the Italian's wiry form in the spacious jersey and patched netherments which were young Nicky's Sunday suit, with boots, cap and other articles of promiscuous assortment.

"The police will be sure to come along—by road round Baleila or by boat from Ballynoggin," said Nicky Joyce. "You must pass me your solemn wurred, sorr, on your sacred sowl, and you Mike, too, never to whisper the laste taste or mintion of the place, no, not in your dhrames, aslape or awake, living or did, dhrunk or sober. I'm going to consale him where the dhivil himself won't find him, for it's a howly cross that's kaping guard all the toime."

Gaspardo was dissimulated on a vast scale, for his new friends regarded him as a martyr as well as a hero, and

his outward appearance was most unlike his former picturesque self.

"No," said Larry in answer to a wondering question of Mike's. "This is not Spanish; it's Italian—quite another language. I learnt it from old Signor Favanelli. He taught me music, too, and everything else I—ought to know. Dear old fellow! He's looked after me all his life, and was heart-broken when I came away."

Then he resumed his conversation with Gaspardo, and the four of them walked along some deep gullies, and skirted some high crags, until they emerged from the basaltic region which formed the neck and head of the natural breakwater, and which was well-marked from the limestone which broke into little warm valleys and green ravines and rose into hills and crests. Then the Atlantic roar came to their ears, for they were getting to the outer side of the jutting barrier which, on the inner side, enclosed the Monks' Creek.

"He tells me that the barque brought sulphur ore, fruit and other things to Swansea, and then worked round to Cork, where she picked up a little cargo and came along here to fill up with herring in cask and dry fish in bulk, on the advice of a smart countryman of theirs, at Swansea. They were like to make a good thing of it, as they bought a lot here on their own account, as well as shipped some for M'Phail's folk."

"But," asked Mike, bewildered with all this cold-blooded commercialism, and also surprised to find Larry so clear-headed and business-like, "how could these poor ignorant sailor men do all this bothering job?"

"Oh, the vessel is a sort of family affair—in thirds. There were three brothers of them at first; but two of them are dead—killed I fancy in some smuggling or similar game, from the light but quick way he rushes over

the little circumstance. The third man is the Captain—Captain Martino. Gaspardo is the son of one of the deceased gentlemen and is second mate. His cousin Augusto—son of the other saint—is first mate."

"So, he's got money in it," remarked Nicky with increased respectfulness. "He's a bit merchant and part owner as well as sailor man."

"Yes," laughed Larry, "and, young as he looks, he's perhaps been a lot of other things, I imagine—soldier, sailor, bandit, waiter—who knows?"

"Mike," advised Nicky, "I do be thinking that you'd better bring Terry along this way wid the dogs and ferrets an' the did rabbits, and start 'em hereabouts. If the constabulary come they'd better have to look for us, and find us hard at wurruk right away from the Creek side. We can then be ignorant of everything wid rayson and circumstance to match, bedad! Besides," he added with a pleasant smile on his weather-beaten face—"we'll want to victual him, an' your hamper will come in handy —wid the thrifles that Nicky will be afther bringing us from the cabin."

Mike bounded away on this soundly-strategic counsel, and Larry explained to Gaspardo that he would be placed in secure hiding for the present, and that his uncle, the Captain, would be informed, so that steps might be arranged for getting him away.

Gaspardo, with tears in his fine dark eyes, thanked his benefactors. He had no idea of the dear delight which he was affording them, for was it not all against the Law?

But he earnestly implored Larry to see Captain Martino alone, and to confide only to him the fact of his escape, and whereabouts.

"I love my cousin Augusto," he sobbed—"ah,

tenderly, most tenderly. We were children together, and have scarcely ever been parted. And he loves me—ah, tenderly, most tenderly. But the share of one goes to the other. If I die—by the hand of justice or otherwise—he inherits my share. And the dear Augusto—who is so charming, so good, so lovable—has a little almost invisible speck of greed in his noble and magnanimous soul: ah, the tiniest, tiniest speck. To the effect that he would, with infallibility, feel himself under the delicate but irresistible compulsion to discover me to the police—as a matter of virtue, of course, of course. He's a beautiful soul, my Augusto, and I love him—ah, with all my heart."

"I see," remarked Larry tersely. "Yes—I shall speak privately to Captain Martino only."

At the turn of a corkscrew path, with a slanting gully on the one hand and steep and almost overhanging rocks on the other, Gaspardo was blind-folded and carefully shepherded along until, after some ups and downs, and stoopings and crawlings, the muffler was taken from his eyes, and a candle was lit.

They were standing in a cave which apparently was but one in a great series of chambers and passage-ways.

It was airy and dry, though the sound of water running and dripping could be heard, as at some distance. The remains of former occupancy could be seen, heaps of dry bracken, evidently for beds; wood and the remains of fires; some broken boxes and barrels serving as furniture, probably; oilskins, cooking utensils, and other oddments.

Larry expounded to Gaspardo, at Nicky's dictation, that this place was consecrated to liberty, for it had furnished a refuge to generations of rebels. Also—immemorial ages ago—for the making of strong waters,

so vital a requirement in that cold and humid climate; and, possibly also—but that was pure theory—for the storing of goods with the free importation of which tyranny was always meddling.

Gaspardo simply said "Altro," and extended a hand to Larry and Nicky.

Then he said, with something of ecstacy in his face and voice:

"Brothers: Noble Souls: you've won my heart to its fullest devotion; for I also am a brigand. My family can proudly boast an unbroken line of brigandage for many centuries—probably from the time of the Greeks. And piracy of course, of course, like you, Illustrious sirs."

Larry laughed until the echoes laughed back in reverberating volleys and deafening bombardments of sound, rollicking choruses answering each other, and unseen troops seeming to rush in with demoniacal refrains until all the caverns roared and shook with blood-curdling ha-ha-ha's—eventually dying away in awesome fashion as if legions of gleeful gnomes were retreating into the far nether earth with their merriment unabated, though growing fainter and fainter as they receded.

Young Nicky and Mike came up, and Gaspardo was duly provisioned; furnished with a fire, a lantern, matches and tobacco; advised on no account to roam beyond his chamber, because he might imperil his life even more than his liberty; and comforted with the promise that Larry would see him again to-morrow—if not earlier.

His protestations of gratitude and obedience were dramatic and effusive; but he did not omit to repeat his whole-hearted views as to Augusto, the tenderly-beloved.

All this took place within a very short period of time:

and a few minutes later the entire original party were excitedly raking the warrens and piling up stacks of dead rabbits. Young Nicky went back to see to the lobster-pots.

In about an hour they heard shouts, and a number of men, escorted by young Nicky, approached.

It was the police party, with the other Scotch fisherman, one of the "Harp" servants, and a Protestant carpenter who had witnessed the stabbing and could identify the criminal.

Not a man of the many others who were likewise present knew or remembered anything from the instant that they understood the sacrilegious nature of the outrage which had provoked the swift reprisal.

Naturally, Nicky and his family, as well as Larry and Mike, were greatly startled and interested in the story. They asked many questions, and Nicky and his boys eagerly joined in the search—which gravitated towards the Monk's Head, the terminal mount of the promontory.

The prevalent impression was that the man was drowned. But it was seen that he was an intrepid swimmer and a desperate man. If, therefore, he chanced to be still alive he would assuredly lay his plans so as to reach his ship somehow—by signals, or by using any boat he might find, or even by another bold swim on the strong outrunning tide, later in the day.

"I can't take any part in this kind of work," said Larry with some dignity to the Inspector. "Not at all in my way. Come Mike, and let's see to the dogs."

The Inspector touched his cap and rubbed his chin.

"Quite so, sir, quite so. Of course, I could call on you in the Queen's name: but there's no need. Those boys of Nicky's are as active as goats and as keen as terriers, and know every in and out of this wild place. My difficulty

is that there isn't a word of Italian amongst the lot of us, nor a word of English, except 'yes' and 'no' and 'how much,' amongst them on the ship. I've been on board, but we can't make head or tail of them, or they, seemingly, of us."

He scratched his head and puckered his brow, annoyed at his helplessness.

"But how did they contrive to do their business here?" enquired Larry.

"Oh, they brought a young fellow from Swansea—a clerk chap that the consignees there had lent them. He went back only yesterday, after fixing up everything for them. The purchases of odds and ends of provisions to-day was mostly done by signs—and they always wanted to pay about half only; they know that much. We gathered all this information ashore to-day. And now, we're stumped by the bothering lingo."

"Well, sir," said Larry, after some reflection, "I can help you in that—barring they don't talk some dhivil of a dialect. I speak Italian fairly well."

The Inspector was delighted, shook his hand, and thanked him warmly.

"But mind, sir," said Larry, with a smile yet with a pride which became him well and greatly impressed the officer, "I shall be happy to give you every assistance in the way of translation and so forth, as a good citizen should. But I must not be expected to help in the thief-catching or criminal-hunting business—which is unfit for an Irish gentleman."

"Quite right, sir — perfectly right, sir," replied the Inspector with cordial appreciation, whilst Mike looked vacant but thought a good deal—his chief reflection being that Larry was one of the greatest men in the world, and it was a wonder, so it was, that he bemeaned himself to

take any notice at all of a low, ignorant rapscallion like Mike the Omadhoun.

Wherein Mike proved, as he always did, that his heart was better, in so far as it was clearer and more direct, than his head.

Little perceiving that he was acting upon suggestion, the Inspector resolved to revisit the barque, with a portion of his detachment and, of course, with Larry—that gentleman consenting unenthusiastically, as if he had not, himself, deftly inspired the idea.

"I'll leave one of my men with the Sergeant, and take the other three. They're knifey people on that ship, and we want to make a thorough overhaul as well as get the particulars we want. Sergeant Doyle and the others will be enough to search here, and to hold their man—if they have the luck to get him."

He whistled for the recall of his men, and Larry, with a bored air, desired Mike to see to the dogs and tie them up, as Terry had, no doubt, put up the ferrets; also to light a fire and have such refreshment as he could find for the Sergeant and the others; further, to select half a dozen couple of rabbits and order one of the lads to place them in the police boat—one couple for each officer and two for the Inspector; penultimately, he would let him know on his return from the barque what arrangements to make for the following day, but, in any case, he would bring some provisions and things in case he decided to continue the sport; and, finally, young Nicky was to row over to Baleila and bring the guns and other fixings, and a coat or two, and waterproofs and rugs, and his shooting-boots, and so forth—all jotted down on the note he was to take with him.

Mike understood perfectly—without a look, motion or inflection of especial meaning. He touched his cap

deferentially as each separate order was given him, and Larry turned, without another look or word, and accompanied the Inspector and his three men to where their boat was lying.

Arrived on board the *Tre Falti* they encountered nothing but scowls and dark looks from the men who stood sulkily about with folded arms and with flashing eyes.

The Captain—a tall straight old man, with a stern and striking face and an appearance of life-long command and cool daring—made a frigid bow but said not a word.

The Inspector had told Larry, in the boat, what he wished to say, ask and do; so the latter began at once in a quiet way.

"Signor Capitano"——

At the first sound of their language the crew clustered round him.

"I am here as a private person only, because of the accidental circumstance that I am able to act as interpreter, in a purely voluntary and unofficial capacity, and without any special interest in the objects of those gentlemen"—indicating the police.

"*Bene, bene,*" muttered the men smiling with gleaming teeth: but as they saw the Captain unmoved and the Augusto—whom Larry intuitively identified, apart from his dress—bowing and smirking, they became gloomy again.

The Captain asked what they wanted, and why this second inquisition.

Larry told the Inspector that they were under the impression that they were all to be arrested and the ship confiscated.

This was a very wide paraphrase. The Inspector laughed and desired a long reply to be made by way of reassurance. He also wanted to come to business.

So did Larry.

The ship's papers were produced, including the clearance documents from Ballynoggin, and every man had to answer to his name, the only absentee being Gaspardo.

Then, as to the search, the Inspector—acting on Larry's carelessly-dropped words—had each man of the crew passed, one by one, to an officer who temporarily deprived him of whatever weapons of offence, in the way of cutlery or gun, which he might have upon him. Then Larry informed them, calmly but authoritatively, that they were to remain on deck, in charge of one of the officers, whilst the Inspector and the two others, with the equally disarmed Augusto as guide, searched the ship.

All this time the Captain's lofty bearing was unchanged. His face was unaltered and, after his first question, his silence unbroken.

Larry, left alone with the Captain, as he had planned, assumed a yet more indifferent manner than before, and, moving away from the men, he told him about Gaspardo, and his message, which was to be secret, except as to old Tomasso and his son Belisario, who, he requested his uncle, should quietly row ashore and smuggle him on board, unknown to Augusto, until they were well out to sea. He desired the Captain to indicate the necessary arrangements as to time, place and signals, and to keep his eye on Augusto.

Old Martino's eyes kindled.

"Ah, Augusto," said he in a low voice but with bitter scorn. "He's right, my poor Gaspardo. Augusto is like a cat, or a girl—soft, smiling, greedy, false, amiable. He alone is ardent in this affair. He weeps for his cousin, and prays for his capture. He already feels himself the richer for Gaspardo's share, and swells to twice his former

size. He burns to coin himself into eyes to discover the dear *infelice*—and hand him to the butchers."

Long before the Inspector returned from his fruitless examination of every accessible part of the barque, Larry and the Captain had come to a clear understanding. The officer found the former smoking and tired-looking, the latter reserved and morose, and the remainder of the crew moody and fidgetty. Augusto alone was energetic and briskly interested—particularly, in the rare zeal and precision with which he added detail upon detail to the description of the fugitive's person, habits, mind, morals, accomplishments and idiosyncracies.

He also bullied and browbeat the two seamen who were ashore at the time of the affray, whose testimony was taken down by the Inspector, as translated by Larry, who told the men to answer his questions fearlessly as he would see them protected from Signor Augusto.

Then he gave him a look which that noble-hearted first-mate received as a timid old peasant does the clanging soldier and champing horse suddenly billeted upon him.

The Inspector's last words through Larry, before he left the ship with his party, were that he hoped that the Captain would not leave the port before the Law Officers in Dublin had decided whether the two seamen—who, after all, would be prisoner's witnesses, for what they were worth—should or should not be detained. In any case, they would be wanted at the Inquest next day.

The Captain icily answered that he had no intention of sailing until something was ascertained as to his poor nephew and, if alive, the interests of his defence were safe-guarded. The two men would be sent to the officer next day, as he required.

Whereat the magnanimous Augusto showed a good deal of rolling eye, and unsheathed tooth, and much

digital activity, whilst his sonorous baritone—a superb vibrating voice for that bony little body—muttered a rapid series of "Altros."

"I must think how I can get even with you, my tenderly-loved little scamp with the grand voice—which I should like to catch and bottle up for use, as wanted," said Larry to himself, as he stepped into the boat, after exchanging grave and formal salutations with the Captain.

At the Harp landing the Inspector, with many expressions of thanks and praise to Larry, went off to his office to write his report and do or attempt other things more or less relevant to the tragic case in hand. Larry—the remaining officers and the boat being left at his service—went ashore and laid in a quantity of necessaries and, especially, superfluities, which were duly stacked in the boat. He also replenished his cash—for contingencies. In a small place like Ballynoggin the worth of a cheque is easily known, and Larry's reputation and position were a sort of public asset.

They were soon across to the other side of the Creek and, guided by the scent as well as the smoke of the wood fire, and by sounds of laughter and song, they joined the shore party, which had had some experiences and vicissitudes.

A merrier, sorrier, or more dilapidated group it would be hard to imagine.

Sergeant Doyle, a burly, good-humoured, knowing-faced man, had come off very happily, with only a few scratches on his face and hands, and some trifling damage to his uniform—thanks to Nicky and Mike, as the Sergeant perfectly understood.

Geordie, the Scotch fisherman, had a broken arm and bruised ribs, and hands and face seamed with cuttings and tearings of skin, whilst his clothes were almost in

tatters. As were also those of the carpenter, who nursed a badly-sprained ankle, in addition to other minor casualties.

The Harp man had been nearly drowned in a small tarn into which he had fallen, had been up to his armpits in a bog, in which he had left his boots; had lost his hat, and come by a black eye in the rolling down from a treacherous foot-hold.

They had been bound up and cheered, according to their several needs, by Nicky and Mike; and had gathered around the fire, in company with a fat jar of whisky and such cold meats, bread, cheese, eggs and pickles as remained in the hamper, and a liberal bakery of potatoes, from Nicky's store, in the ashes.

Nicky and Mike were cooing with sympathy, and clattering with compliments; young Terry was silent and demure; and Sergeant Doyle loosened his belt, for he seemed as if he were full of a year's suppressed laughter.

And they sang songs—particularly Mike—and told diverting stories, and Terry fetched his father's bagpipes and danced to the playing; and they drank toasts, smoked and otherwise enjoyed themselves.

Geordie had treasured up in his surly mind the hints—dropped in a casual way—that he would have to appear at the inquest, which would probably be adjourned again and again until the assassin was found. Also, that he would certainly be detained—by force, probably—until the trial; possibly, the smack and crew as well.

It would, of course, be unpleasant for him if the smack were not restrained from sailing away, for he would either have to live in jail, or his life would not be worth much amongst the people.

The Harp man now said that his notion of the affair was

rather confused—it had passed so quickly. He was not clear who stabbed whom. He rather thought that it was the Scotchman who had struck the other foreigner.

The carpenter had no doubts—but many regrets. He didn't care, and wasn't afraid; nor to be intimidated; right was right; he knew his trade, and could get work anywhere; and what the hades was Ballynoggin, anyway, or its people, or its opinion? He'd like to hang the beggar with his own hands, for it was cowardly and sudden.

After a time he mellowed into harmony and sang Sweet Afton and Annie Laurie very prettily, and shook hands all round—but never let go of his "principles."

The four new-comers, who had not realised how famished they were until they smelt the delightful odour of the baked potatoes and of the other things, came up, gracious with their burdens of bountiful provender.

Mike sought Larry's face, and catching there a quick smile, leapt into the air with a shrill whoop, and with Nicky and Terry ran to the boat and brought up the remaining packages, baskets, and jars.

Then the picnic commenced—the old-stagers joining the fresh-arrivers as if all their previous proceedings had been merely an ephemeral kind of stop-gap, or rehearsal.

Then ensued discussion—Larry not bothering to take any share in it—which crystallised into unanimous opinion that the Italian was drowned, and a good job, too; that it would take five hundred monkeys—barring they were not goats—to thoroughly explore this wild dhivil's nose of a god-forsaken counthry; that, in view of the tides, the rocks, and the quicksands off the Monks' Head, no creature, and hardly a boat, could save itself at that point; that if the man was alive, he'd be most likely to make his way back across the Creek and so give himself a chance to escape to his ship, or on to the railway, or, anyway, to the main-

land, and that they should patrol the opposite side; that it was getting late, and they'd best be going acrost; and thanks to his honour Larry O'Gra, and may his shadow never grow less! for sure, it's a mighty fine hid he's got on him, and a powerful eddication; and a free and open hand as becomes a gentleman; and a swate voice; and would his honour trate them to a taste of that same, just one song if they might make so bould, and huroo for his honour!

So, at last, the rabbits, and a few couple more, were put into the police boat; young Nicky was seen rowing back from Baleila, and Larry and Mike were left, with Nicky and his lads, on their side of the Creek.

* * * * *

Captain Martino had sent Tomasso and his son Belisario a-fishing in the bay. They were expert with the net, and their boat was provided with mast and sail, to help their cruising and return. The captain had a frugal mind.

Dejection and inaction were bad things, in his opinion; so he set the idle crew to greasing blocks, easing chafing gear and overhauling the canvas. The mainsail, he found, wanted shaking out and drying; so he had it rigged, and it hung and flapped in a loose and slovenly fashion, secured by a few careless lacings to the boom, to the derision of all who saw it. The captain said nothing.

Chapter II

THE inquest on the violently-deceased Scotch fisherman was duly opened on the day following at the Harp, amidst suitable surroundings. Every constable who could be spared, and many who could not, mustered at hand; the troops were confined to their barracks on the rising ground

behind the town; the Mayor and other magistrates kept within call. Not only was every room in the inn on the street level full of excited drinkers, but every window was turned into a serving-bar for those outside, and a long table of planks and casks in the inn-yard abutting on the rough landing-place was converted into a counter, on which porter, spirits, tobacco and bread and cheese were piled, and a lively trade transacted.

A stimulating sense of animation and interest was in the air, and scenes and events were anticipated with much foreboding by some and more enjoyment by others.

It is generally admitted that certain news, particularly if of a dangerous, turbulent or incendiary description, travels swiftly and mysteriously even in scattered and uncivilised communities, and amongst those unprovided with those rapid means of communication on which we are habituated to rely.

This is being constantly exemplified in the wilds of Africa, the bazaars of India, the vastly separated cities of China, the jungles of Burmah, and more especially in the south and west of Ireland, where the wing-heeled Hermes has his posts and stations at every turn, and thousand-tongued Rumour whispers on every hill, and the Sirens shout across every lake, stream or inlet.

This may be a cause, or effect, of the spirit of demonstration which so powerfully possesses the natives, of whose real character—ethnologic, moral, mental, and psychologic—their fellow-subjects are almost as ignorant as they are, themselves.

No people in the wide world are so prompt to demonstrate on every conceivable occasion, with sudden defiances, and improvised indignations, and truculences always out of proportion—frequently out of reason, or without any; but never without keen zest and joy. Work will be

abandoned, a drum will appear from somewhere, banners will flutter into view from an unsuspected corner, a cornet will burst upon the sense, and a procession is on the march—why or whither matters little; somebody knows, it is presumed, and that suffices.

So, sturdy crowds from Baleila, Kilmacartie, and the hamlets and lone farms and cabins, gathered at the north end of Ballynoggin.

Larry's name had been whispered in connection with the business in hand.

But these formed, after all, but a small portion of the ever-growing assemblage, the majority being, as might be expected, townsmen.

The fisher folk remained on shore. When the men at O'Dwyer's tannery—all Catholics—heard that those of Hagan the miller—all Protestants—had stopped work, they forthwith put on their coats and did likewise; as did most of those employed in the vicinity, whose numbers were reinforced strongly along every avenue.

Official anxiety was justifiable, for the situation was perilously explosive. The finest generalship, however, had been shown by the Coroner's officer, who had selected a very local jury, all Catholics, with John the Leprachaun at the head of them, whom, by a word and a look to the others, as well as by his name topping the list, he designed to be the foreman.

He had also adroitly dropped another hint or two destined to be useful and—but this he was too shrewd to disclose—tranquillising.

Now John the Leprachaun, ironically designated the Fairy-shoemaker because he made the clumsiest and heaviest shoes in Ireland, was the most fearless, fluent, and irresponsible disputationist in all the West-country.

Another circumstance that was calculated to make for

peace was the disappearance of the Scotch smack which had stolen away with the early morning tide, and with Geordie.

Larry drove up in his jaunting car from Baleila, Father O'Kay beside him, and Mike and another boy on the other seat.

The Inspector saluted him, at which there was some sensation, which was increased when Father Blount came up and greeted him and his fellow priest, with much cordiality.

Both the good men had come along partly because of what they had heard, but still more because of what they feared—particularly, as so many able-bodied sheep of their respective flocks had trudged in to what might be more of the nature of a holy war than a mere show.

"They are such children of nature," said Father O'Kay to Father Blount.

"Yes, they have simple souls and soft hearts," assented Father Blount.

"And they've the heaviest fists in the county," responded Father O'Kay proudly.

"Who's him?" roughly asked a man in the crowd, pointing to Larry.

Mike turned round sharply.

"He's the foinest and cleverest man and gintleman in all Ireland, and I'd loike to see the man that doubts it," and he spat into his palms challengingly.

Somebody laughed derisively.

Now, there is not another human being living who can throw into a simple brief sound, in the form of a laugh, so much galling insult, bitter scorn, withering contumely, scorching exasperation, and unforgettable outrage, as can an Irishman.

"Don't touch him, boys," said Larry with a smile. "He

doesn't know me, you see—and that's, maybe, lucky for me. He'd perhaps think less of me if he knew more of me. Ha, ha, ha!"

They laughed with him; and burly Jim Casey, the smith of Kilmacartie, who had a voice to match, made general proclamation:

"Dare, any man here or elsewhere, to say a wurrud agin Larry O'Gra, an' he'll wish that the mother as bore him had died a widder afore he came into the wurruld, bedad!"

At which there was a lot of good-humoured cheering.

Just then Captain Martino landed, with his two seamen. His second boat, holding Tomasso and Belisario and showing a good deal of untidily-housed net hanging over, followed, but turned when the Captain landed, and, hoisting a lugsail, jibed, filled, and sailed away in search of a fishing ground.

"Why can't they buy their fish like dacent peeple?" grumbled a fisherman.

"Bekase," sententiously explained another man, "don't ye see, ye can catch 'em in all languages, or in Latin like Sint Pather, but ye can't be buying thim excipt in Oirish, bedad! or English as the tyrants do be calling it who make us spake it. An' the poor sowls have sorra a wurrud to fly with, begorra! Now, it's good sinse, and what's more, good rayson I'm afther teaching yez, don't ye see?"

"Thrue for yez, Denny; it's the illigant larning ye've got, glory be to God!" assented several.

The Inspector led them up to where Larry was standing; and took the opportunity to whisper to him that he could do more to prevent breaches of the peace that day than the Force and the Mayor at their back.

Larry was amused at the idea, but promised to do his best.

Captain Martino and Larry saluted each other with sweeping hats and elegant bows, and the spectators were wonderfully impressed with these stately courtesies —a mood changed to a keen emotion when the two Italian sailors uncovered their heads and kissed Larry's hand.

"The poor helpless cratures!" muttered some with genuine sympathy.

"God bless Larry O'Gra!" was a cry which relieved the feelings of the majority. But there were discontented mutterings. The stout Protestants present evidently considered the exhibition one-sided, and there were scowling faces amongst them.

It was a critical moment when the carpenter witness was seen making his way limpingly between the lines of police—and one section pressed forward aggressively and the other defiantly.

Larry drew the man to him, and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"Boys," said he in a ringing voice. "You should respect an honest man for sticking to his guns, right or wrong. He can't fight now by reason of having fallen lame. But I tell you what—he can drink with the best man here. And he can sing a rattling fine song. We're not cowards to refuse him the right to his own opinions, are we? Bedad!" At which there was much good tempered chaff and easy laughter.

The Inspector beamed, the Protestant frowns fled, and both sides cheered as the brave fellow—the jolliest and most Calvinistic carpenter in the Province—was escorted into the improvised Court-room.

Larry followed with the Italians.

He had but a few words to address to the Captain, in the casual tone of a man hard up for a topic:

"There is a sort of idea about that the dead man seized Gaspardo's stiletto and committed suicide. The Scotch witness has departed in his ship on this morning's tide. One witness thinks it was as I said: another says Gaspardo did the stabbing. Your men yesterday said they saw a scrimmage and the man fall and Gaspardo run—nothing more. Now, you have no legal adviser, and you might do worse than claim your right to put just one or two questions to each witness."

"But, what questions? I am bewildered."

Larry said something succinct in a low tone, the Captain nodding quick comprehension and murmuring in his round deep voice a succession of "*bene*, *bene*, *bene*."

"And now, you have to go in. I shall have to sit somewhere else, I suppose, inside. As to the rest——"

The Captain pressed his hand as he passed in with his men, conducted by an officer.

Just as Larry was about to follow with the two priests, the Inspector who had charge of the proceedings came up.

The Superintendent—a handsome, gentlemanly fellow, but young—had arrived and taken command outside.

"I wish you hadn't to go in, sir," said the Inspector to Larry. "They're in the humour to mind you, but dhivil a soul else. You've struck their fancy powerfully. I see great danger—very great. A spark will set them off. I've some influence on them, at times—but I have to go in, too."

"Say a word to them, Larry," said Father O'Kay. "Sure, the Inspector is quite right. You're a mighty lump of a raparee, Larry, my son; but you've taken hold of them from horn to hoof."

"Oh, I don't think so. But, if you really fancy it will do any good, here goes."

Some half a dozen broad steps with a hand-rail led from the water-side ground to that part of the house in which the Coroner was to sit.

Larry stood on the top stair.

"Boys," he began; and there was that in the ring of the voice that instinctively told every hearer that the speaker was serious. There was deep silence.

"Boys: have I any friends here?"

"You have, sorr—thousands of 'em."

"An' if any here isn't we'll mighty soon make 'em," and other exclamations to the like tenor resounded.

"Very well, then. Let me know them by the hands that are held up for me."

Up went about an acre of arms.

"Good—and thank you kindly, for I believe you. Now, you don't know me much, but some of you may mind my father, Laurence O'Gra of Baleila. But you do know that I've only lately come home—for this dear Ireland is home—for the first time. But I come from a land beyond the seas where the word of honour of a man is a thousand times more regarded than a furlong of oaths. Well now, I want you to give your word of honour to me—to me, Larry O'Gra, one of your own selves—that you will not lift hand or stick or stone or anything else in an unfriendly way this whole blessed day; and I'm wanting to pass on that same word of honour, in your name, to the authorities here. Is it so hard to be placid and peaceful for a day?"

"Begorra, thin, an' we'll murdher the man who won't kape the pace!" exclaimed many men heartily and with convincing emphasis.

"Now, boys, listen to me. If you break your word, you will so shame me that I swear by the holy saints

I'll never set foot in Ballynoggin again, for the very disgrace of it."

There was no mistaking that resolute high-minded look and tone.

"Never fear, sorr!" "Be aisy, we won't—no, not if the hids is in rows waiting to be bruk." "We'll kape our words, sorr."

"Gentlemen—I thank you." It was a fine touch—that use of the word 'gentlemen,' at this particular point. "I am sure you will. You will remember your honour, and mine. And now," in a lighter tone, "if any man here fancies that I am a suckling or a weakling because I speak like this to-day—will somebody hand me an empty pewter pot?"

There was a roar of laughter at this very unexpected turn. A dozen pewter tankards were reached up to him. He took one, whilst all eyes were intently bent on him, held it out at arm's length for a couple of minutes or less, and then raised it above his head so that all might see it.

It was crushed flat.

There was a moment of surprise, then a tempest of applause. Larry laughed like a boy.

"I'll give five pounds to the man who does the like by the time I come back from the Inquest. In the same way, mind: at arm's length, the other arm hanging down, and within two minutes. Form yourselves into squads of a dozen each—or elect umpires and have a general competition: and five golden sovereigns to the winner, or division if more than one."

The crowd cheered, yelled, and laughed delightedly.

The Inspector said something that Larry seemed to overhear.

"Away with that drum," cried he as if irritated, in a

voice of authority: instantly loud shouts arose of "Away wid it, an' mighty sharp, Shamus M'Gee."

"Take it away, or we'll be afther putting your shape's hid through the shapeskin"; and other threatenings.

Larry interposed.

"Here, Shamus; give me hold of the drumsticks. So. And I want that cornet. Lend it to me, now. And, boys, I'll maybe give you a tune or two on it some other day—not when a corpse is lying close at hand with a hole in the heart. Now, go slow, keep cool, and remember our agreement."

He went in, with those accompanying him, in a whirl of cheerful and admiring sounds, to the wonderment of the anxious Superintendent.

The big room was insufferably crowded and almost intolerably hot and foul; but Irishmen have not, as a rule, the natural repugnance to physical discomfort that Englishmen have.

The Jury had already viewed the body under the guidance of the Usher. After a dreary waste of time, and of many wranglings and janglings of which nobody appeared to know the reason or object, the proceedings began, the Court was constituted, silence vainly enjoined, and the formal evidence started.

No incident occurred in the dry police evidence until the knife or dagger was produced, when somebody in the audience shouted an offer of five shillings for it.

"It's moine for tin shillings, an' here's the money," cried John the Leprachaun, foreman of the Jury.

"Order," cried the Coroner, and the Usher called out "Silence!"

"There was no more bid," said the foreman, "I call on the entire Coort to witness it."

"No more there wasn't, Johnny," yelled the Jury and audience like one man.

"Sit down, sir," ordered the Coroner sternly, "and let the business proceed."

"Well, then, an' I won't, until you make a note of it," insisted the foreman.

The Coroner refused: the matter was not in his province, it was irregular, and the police alone had control of the subject.

Then there was chaos for a quarter of an hour, a cyclone of argument, abuse, declamation, recrimination, menace, derision, and ridicule from twenty or thirty throats at the same time: but all quieted down when the Coroner stood up, took his hat, and shouted that he would adjourn the enquiry unless they went on with it in an orderly fashion.

So they settled down once more, refreshed and satisfied with the brief interlude, and the doctor followed the constable.

The doctor minutely described the nature of the dead man's injuries.

The Captain, when the doctor had apparently finished, rose in his dignified way and requested leave to put a question.

Larry, of course, acted as Interpreter. There was some difficulty on the Coroner's part in according a *locus standi* to the Captain; but the Jury joined the audience in five minutes' unassorted but vociferous expostulations, and the Coroner gave way.

"I respectfully desire to ask the signor doctor—as a matter of science and not of evidence—if it is possible for a man to inflict such an injury upon himself?"

Larry, who had been sworn in the usual manner to interpret truly and faithfully, translated the question.

The doctor was rather startled, reflected, went through the motion of stabbing himself in the same spot, and, after some further thought, replied in the affirmative: it was possible—just possible.

The Captain bowed, uttered a deep-toned "*Grazia, Signor*," and sat down.

The foreman nudged his next man, who elbowed his neighbour, who passed it on, until every man had received what the Usher, who was the Coroner's officer, mentally characterised as an eye-opening dinge in the small ribs.

The Harp man could only speak to a scrimmage, a grab by the deceased, followed by his fall. It all passed like a flash. He thought that the foreigner had started running before the man fell.

The Captain had but one question to ask: "Did not the unfortunate deceased clutch the Italian's knife?"

"He made a clutch. I saw the gleam of steel. I fancy it was in the Scotchman's hand, but I can't be sure. I won't swear either way—but I think so."

The same query was put to the two Italian seamen.

They replied that they were occupied, some little distance off; that they heard the fisherman's voice, a cry by Gaspardo, a confusion, and a fall. It seemed to them that the fisherman had seized Gaspardo's knife and threatened him with it, wherepon he ran away, and, in some way, the fisherman stabbed hinself, intentionally or accidentally, they cannot say; but the signor fisherman was very drunk.

The carpenter was positive and precise.

The Scotchman, he said, made a grab at the little image and bag which the Italian had round his neck, and which was exposed on his breast by his shirt-front being open; the Italian drew his knife or dagger and drove it into the Scot's chest, and took to his heels. To the Captain's

question he replied by an unhesitating and categorical negative. He was quite sure; he stood close at hand and saw everything from first to last: he had no doubt whatsoever.

The Captain, on receiving the translated reply, did not move a muscle of his face, but, regarding the witness fixedly, and deprecating any desire to give him pain or annoyance, asked:

"Were you absolutely sober at that particular time?"

Oh, yes: quite sober: he had only just finished his dinner. No, he was not a total abstainer, and those who so deemed him lied.

The Court-room was ripe for effervescence—angrily. The Coroner, however, was severe, the Inspector looked determined, and, best of all, the foreman smiled and the Jury giggled. A sly glance of the Usher's eye had produced this effect—which beholding, the audience was comforted and calmed itself.

But there was uproarious merriment when, on the victim's fellow-sailor being called, it was announced that the fishing smack had stolen away in the dawn, bearing the witness with it.

Larry looked not only uninterested but unconscious, and even tired of the business. Nor did despondency flap her gloomy wings when the Inspector informed the Court that the Italian had not yet been arrested; but when he added that it was more than probable that he was drowned in attempting to escape, a marked and painful sensation ran through the hushed Court.

The Coroner was putting his papers together, the Usher called out "Silence," and threw an eye at the foreman, who jumped up and said, in a decided but hurried way:

"We find that the deceased committed suicide while

dhrunk, and that he is likewise guilty of petty larceny for he shtole the knoife to do it with."

"Hear, Hear!" cried the Jury, and the audience cheered.

"But, but, gentlemen—this won't do, you know, this won't do. The enquiry must be adjourned——"

"Ah, but you can't now, sorr. The verdict's given. We've been too quick for yez, aha!" retorted John in a bantering, exasperating tone of voice.

"I was just about to adjourn the Court——"

"Well, then, you can't, an' that's all there's to be said about it," said a juror.

"But, gentlemen, listen to reason. Here's a man killed —'butchered to make a Roman holiday'"—he had been burning to bring this quotation off, at any cost, and he had, besides, a lot of rhetorical matter to emit.

"It's insultin' us ye are, sorr, an' we won't take it from you or anyone else. We are Roman, sure enough, and proud of it."

"Go it, Johnny. So we are: and he's no call to bring it in here," cried a man from the back, crashing his way forward.

"An' we've a right to a holiday and no thanks to you or the like of you," cried another.

"Butcher, yourself. Sure, an' it's that same, and your docthoring, as ye make your living by, bad cess to ye!"

"Faith! an that's six o' the one an' half a score of the t'other," laughed a woman.

The Inspector whispered to the Coroner, who shrugged his shoulder, pocketed his papers and went out, by another door, with the medical witness.

"Inspector," said Larry, taking his listless eyes from the ceiling, "I'm going to keep the Jury up here, by standing them something to eat and drink. Let them be

speechifying and all that among themselves. There would be trouble down below if they go down now."

"Larry," said Father O'Kay, "you're a smart boy. I didn't think it was in you."

Larry laughed.

"Wait for me, Father O'Kay," said he. "I must see to this carpenter fellow." He raised his voice:

"Is there any man here who'll see my lame carpenter friend home quietly—by that door, where they won't find a crowd? He's a friend of mine; and who insults him insults me."

He found volunteers for this service, gave his orders to the Harp witness for refreshments in a room upstairs for the Jury, and then he, with the priests, got out of the vile atmosphere into the sweet air outside—where he at once saw the Captain and his men into their boat.

He was welcomed with shouts upon shouts. The Superintendent was visibly relieved at his reappearance.

They exchanged a few words: the officer hesitated, then smiled and nodded.

"Boys," cried Larry: but he could get no further for some minutes, for cheers and flattering ejaculations. "Boys: I want you to help me."

"Troth an' we will, sorr."

"Aye, through fire and watther, bedad!"

"Well then, it's this way. My heart's sore for those gallant handsome fellows standing there"—pointing to the police—"men with hungers and thirsts and tiredness like you and me, and never a bite nor a sup across their silent duty-bound lips. Now, I want half-a-dozen of you help to clear that table, and lend a hand to bring from the house bread and cheese and sandwiches and porter; and stand aside like gentlemen, whilst the poor good fellows have some refreshment. The Superintendent has been kind

enough to give leave, and I want to have this pleasure. Will somebody send the landlord to me, or, if he's too busy, give him the order from me?"

It was most unusual and, probably, the very novelty was agreeable, for this unwonted proceeding produced immense hilarity and overflowing goodwill.

When the constables once more fell in, smiling, Larry announced that as his prize of £5 had not, as he was informed, been won, he would re-offer it on a future occasion, and the stalwart constabulary would be free to compete for it, in witness whereof he presented his own crushed tankard as a trophy to the Superintendent.

This was hailed with laughter and cheers, redoubled when the Superintendent gravely accepted it with a military salute.

Then Larry, in the name of the people there, appealed to him to march all his men away, assuring him that not a man there would disgrace himself, or the town, or the speaker, by any single act of turbulence or breach of peace.

"And here's my hand on that, sir."

The Superintendent shook his hand, smiled and, saying that he would trust them, and to oblige Mr O'Gra, he marched his force away amidst the extraordinary sounds of friendly cheering.

Then Larry made advertisement that he had arranged that the cornet and drumsticks be returned by the landlord at dinner-time next day, together with a couple of bottles of whisky for the band—and not a second sooner.

The quickest-witted people in the world—for the Irish undoubtedly may be so described, as it is merely the redundancy of talent and the deficiency of common-sense that makes them so wrong-headed—instantaneously appreciated Larry's tactics in a storm of amused approval.

"I can't stay to see the full fronts of your backs for—for reasons. I've a good deal to do to-day. And,—and, I've promised to visit that Italian ship, because it's in great trouble and distress they are. For they haven't a friend and don't know a word of language barring their own."

There were murmurs of sympathy, and, still more, of gratitude to the speaker.

"So, promise me to scatter at once, and go your ways home, and let there be no crowds of you, and no disturbances. Good-bye to every one of you."

Mike came up and said something, apparently for Larry's private ear; the boy brought up the car, and, taking leave of Father Blount, who was going into the town, he made his way as best he could through the press, recognising by name his Baleila and Kilmacartie acquaintances, who were proud men that day. He was nearly shredded fine by the numbers seeking to shake his hand or even to touch him, and, at length, he drove off towards Baleila, as he had come, Father O'Kay beside him, and Mike and the boy on the other side, followed by wild and enthusiastic yells.

"You're a young dhivil, Larry," said Father O'Kay. "It's the Irish blood of the O'Gra's—more pow'r to it!—and the Castilian blood of the General's daughter, your blessed mother in heaven, (and," this to himself, "maybe the odd drop of some African king of long ago, in her veins) and the mixture of Satan and better things: and, och! I'm bothered and surprised and delighted altogether and entirely."

Nearly half way to the village, Larry pulled up and jumped down, as did Mike.

"Nicky has a boat hereabouts for us," he explained. "I must go across for some—some things I want, and then I'm going to see those poor fellows on the ship. I

promised them, you know—poor creatures in a strange land, sir."

"Larry," said the priest, walking him and Mike away from the car. "Have you got him—that poor hunted guilty, provoked creature, who sinned—if he sinned—in defending his religion?"

Larry turned his head away.

"Father O'Kay," said he, after a pause, "I don't think that—that he's above ground at this minute."

He would not meet the priest's eye.

"Now, Mike, you Omadhoun: are you going to be afther humbugging the guardian of your soul?"

"Faith, your reverence, I only know what Larry knows: not a traneen more an' a hill of a sight less—saving yer presence, sorr," and he called to Nicky.

They exchanged farewells in the charming Irish way, and separated.

Old Nick and young Nick were waiting. The former had transacted his business in the town, aud reported with a smile to Larry, whom he carried through the shoal water into the boat, which reached the cove on the opposite bank as the priest drove into Baleila.

Chapter III

"Away wid yez, Nicky," briskly said old Nick to his son as his passengers and he leapt ashore. "There's a shlant o' wind coming up fresh an' free. Ye know the signals an' the shpot. Off wid yez, now."

The lad hoisted sail and was away, with a laugh and a musical bit of sailor chantie, almost before his amphibious and proud father had finished speaking.

"I've brought your thick boots, sorr, and some other

things for use. You'd best change at once. I've got a catchy about here."

He evidently meant a *caché*. It was an enlarged hole in a limestone rock, well above high watermark, like the mouth of an adit in a mine, secured by a rough door, and serving as a handy store for general purposes. It was undoubtedly convenient, and smelt like the concentration of ten neglected fish markets.

"But, dear old Nick," said Larry, whilst changing boots and buttoning gaiters. "I'm starving, and so is Mike, I know."

"Sure, sorr, an' don't I know it? An' wudn't it be a murdherin' shame to let ye go hungry, an' the lashings an' lavings of yer own vittels about? Aha, now! Look ye here, sorr. Here's could bafe an' roast rabbit, an' a rabbit poy as you'd swear had fed himself up on onions an' bacon and pepper and all manner of spicy things, and a bit o' biled salted pig that wudn't boast to call the Lord Liftinant his cousin, an' harrud boiled eggs just laid by the hins, an' I can show ye them if ye misdoubt my wurrud, an'—an' the white brid an' the butther that smills like a posey, an' the whishky, an' ale an' shtout——"

All this talking was being done in gasps and snatches, as he laid out the articles whilst ticking off the items, as an auctioneer garnishes the dry details of an inventory.

Mike assisted, and the three men enjoyed a hearty and certainly well-deserved repast, with the sound of the sea and the winds for symphony, and circling gulls and observant land-birds for company.

"Oh, Gassy's all roight, sorr," said Nicky, in reply to a question, "Terry's got him along beyant there—what we call the Wicked Abbot's punchbowl, or just the Bowl for short and to save shcandal. Though, I'm tould, it's a matther of about five thousand years ago since that wicked

Abbot had his dhrinking match wid the Dhivil's best dhrinker and both cooled off in that shpot, which has remained bottomless dape at all toimes ivver since, an' biles like blazes whin the wind do be blowing from the west, or north or south, It's this howly east alone—could as it is—that doesn't be afther raisin' a riffle or a swiffle on the Bowl."

"Bad scran to ye! Nicky," laughed Mike. "You've been running like a mill-race about that Bowl—your namesake fly away wid it!—and tould us nothing about the little gintleman himself."

"An' that's thrue, Micky, me son," answered Nick. "Well, thin, it's this way. The boys an' him had got mighty thick an' friendly, and they've had lots of talk and divarsions——"

"Easy now, Nicky," laughed Larry, topping up a hearty meal with half a dozen hard-boiled eggs—two bites to an egg—as if they were olives. "And the man with never a word of English to his back!"

"That's just the wonderment of it, sorr," replied the lobster-man, "the little fellow is as smart as paint, quick as a ferret, and amusing as a kitten. Language! Why, he's no need of it, by all accounts. He rades a motion or a sign as if it was as aisy as a big shop-board. And as for his talking—may the ould 'un take me if he wants wurruds at all, at all."

Larry nodded understandingly, but Mike was puzzled, and said: "Nicky Doyle—thim boys of yours is running a moighty risk of becoming orphins of a suddint if ye don't explain what you do be maning, now."

"Micky, it's like this. The crathur seems to have all he requires in his body—laughter an' dhivil-may-care and defiance in his shoulders, arguments in his joints, and wurruds by the hundred thousand in the fingers of him.

Then there's his eyes, and eyebrows, and mouth, and backbone: and, begorra! his very fate and ligs. Talk of tongues, bedad! They're all tongues, an' what's more, he can use any number of 'em all at the same toime. It's a moral, sorr. He makes you a picter of what he wants you to persaive, an' acts what he wants to tell you. It's enough to make a pig or a prior die of laughing, by the tearin' ages!"

They lit their pipes, whilst the things were being put back into the rocky cupboard; but Nicky stopped to continue the theme.

"Whoy, what does he do last night, afther crying and tearing his hair, and singing, and dancing, and smoking all the toime thim paper things ye gave him, but he gives ache of the boys a big silver money, size of a crownpace, with the image of our howly lord and father the Pope himself on it ——" Nicky devoutly crossed himself, as did Larry and Mike, "and he showed them so clarely and nately that they were to hoide it until afther he was safe away that a blind asylum would have jumped at his maning."

"Now," ruminated Mike, "how the—the hill could he do that?"

"Aisy, Mike, aisy—for him. He first gathered up the coin and made as if he was sticking it away in a saycret and cautious manner—standing in a corner, with his head over his shoulder lest anyone should see him, and buttoning his coat over it. Thin he made a boat of the palm of one hand, and with the fingers of the other made a man going to it and getting on board, slapping his chest and pointing to show that it was him. Thin, he motioned sails set and the ship away and sailing and sailing, and getting home at last——"

"Arrah, now, Nick! sure, an' he couldn't be afther demonsthrating that same," said Mike.

"Couldn't he, by jabers? But you're tremenjously mishtook, for he did. Sails down, anchor cast, himself stepping ashore, and embracing and kissing his frinds, and dancing and cheering by rayson of the happy voyage: all as plain, and a good dale more loively than the blackest print on yalla paper."

They laughed at the graphic description, and started on their tramp.

Nicky was very full of the subject: besides, they had plenty of time, as yet, though they kept going.

"Hear to this now," said he, when they took an "easy" after some steep and scrambling climbing. "He had a gold pace, with the same howly imblim on it, for the mother; and he made the boys undershtand that in a brace of shakes. He went through the cirimony of combing the long hair, as a woman does, and of arranging dress and skirt, and a feymale way of walking, and smiling and dolly consaited ways. They nearly had a fit. How could they possibly mishtake him? Oh, he's a funny little imp, and Terry, especially, will have the sore heart whin he's gone. He's got quite clever, too, with his beanies and his altros."

"What's the signifying of thim wurruds, Nicky?" enquired Mike.

"Dhivil a bit I know, Mike," answered the other, "but it's like this. Beanie's said as quick as ye can put yer tongue to it, up to a dozen or a score of times without taking breath. It seems to mane—'all right' or, 'I see,' or 'go on,' or something of that sort."

"And the other wurrud——"

"Ah, altro. Well, by all tokens, it's a sort of 'don't care whether it is or not,' or 'indade,' or 'hanged if I will,' or 'don't matter a curse,' or 'go to blazes quietly and gentaley,' and a hape of other things."

Larry laughed heartily and said that Nicky was quite correct.

"It's the boys, sorr," said he modestly.

He had sent Terry with Gaspardo round by a more circuitous but less arduous route, and calculated that they would arrive at the trysting-point at about the same time.

It was certainly difficult going, but at length, by the aid of some ropes with which Nicky came provided, and much rough-and-tumble mounting and sliding and creeping and some agile jumping, they found themselves under the terrific fronts of the Monk's Head, with his vast scowling buttresses and jagged outposts of splintered rock.

In a great circular recess lay a calm body of water connected by a canal-like channel with the bay. Of course, this was only apparent at low tide, as on this occasion.

It was a curious formation in itself, but the deep channel at all times was a much more singular phenomenon. It was probably due to a buried river debouching at that point, rather than to the mere scooping action of the sea. It was easy to imagine what a fearful sight a storm, or even a heavy tide, must be with that dreadful jagged headland to receive and fling back the shock of the charging waves.

"That's where the dhirty spalpeen of a low-minded thafe of a Dutchman shtuck, sorr," said Nicky, pointing to a sand-bank running out from a line of low rocks like rough spines, or like the broken and discoloured teeth of some submerged open-jawed Titan of inconceivable dimensions.

"Whist now, Nicky, bad cess to you!" said Mike hastily, turning very red.

"By me sowl! but it was foine, sorr," continued Nicky, seeing the look of enquiry in Larry's face; and ignoring Mike's uneasiness.

"What was it, Mike?" asked Larry, suspicious of him—but wide of the real facts.

"Oh, just nothing at all, Larry," answered Mike uncomfortably. "Nicky, bad scran to ye, it's did an' sore an' sorry you'll be for this, bedad!"

But the story of Mike's heroism and daring came out in despite.

"Mike," said Larry severely, "and you never told me of this! Give me your hand instantly, you dear brave rascal, or I'll break the skull of you."

Mike's face was scarlet, but he nodded a threatening head at Nicky who only shook with laughter. That shaking—Larry and Mike being to leeward of him—was like unto the opening of an urban fishmonger's shop on a Monday morning in the leafy month of June.

They found Gaspardo and Terry waiting for them.

Naturally, Larry had much to tell the fugitive, who went, by rapid transition, through every mood, and gave unpremeditated but dramatic expression to every fancy, thought, and emotion that could possibly animate any gross of full-blooded and excitable human beings.

The information that the man whom he had stabbed was dead he received with a shrug, a lift of an eyebrow, and an *altro* of perfect indifference.

The immediate business in hand was explained to him. He was told that Tomasso and Belisario were cruising about, under the pretence of fishing, and that the elder of the boys was out in his boat to give them the agreed signals and pilot them to the spot arranged for his embarkation.

His impatience developed cerebral energies and muscular

elasticities beyond anything that the majority of those present had ever suspected, or that ordinary science could tabulate.

He contorted himself into angles; he sprang, crouched, tore his hair, went through the form of dismembering himself and of pulling out his eyes and ears and throwing them away; he shouted, shrieked, blasphemed and laughed like a lunatic-ward.

Then, pale and exhausted, he became suddenly calm and gave notice in a solemn tone that he was going to pray.

Mike and Nicky smiled—more or less audibly.

"Ha!" cried Gassy swiftly, "you think I can't pray—that I have no particular friends and patrons up there, eh? But you shall see, you shall see—*per Bacco!*"

He cleared a small ring—as a street conjuror does, by walking round, with outstretched arms—and then began his orisons, to the speechless amazement of the others.

This was the manner of it:

He took off the hat he wore, which he held to his chest with his left hand, crown downwards.

Then he raised his face to the heavens, whistled, and with his wagging forefinger beckoned the saint he called, appeared to catch him as if he were a passing fly, and to throw him, with a vigorous neck-and-crop pitch, into his hat, accompanying each chucked-in arrival with a deeply-aspirated "Ai!"

"Santa Angosturina di Botella—Ai! Santa Catarina de Velo—Ai! Santa Bianca di Nonevero—Ai! Santa Marguerita di Festinalente—Ai! Santa Vermouta di Torino—Ai! Santo Rissoto de Monico—Ai! Santo Spaghetti di Gatti—Ai! Santa Baldachino di Conamore—Ai! Santa Trovatore de Allegrodacapa—Ai! Santa Otello di Alfreseo—Ai! Hurry up, lazybones—hurry

up, now—Ai! Ai! Ai! Aha! Aha! Aha! Bene, bene, bene, bene!"

Then he wiped his streaming brow, expanded his lungs and ran over his list with incredible rapidity, in a single breath as it seemed, concluding the enumeration with a satisfied dozen or two of "bene's" in a rippling kind of deep-chested purr.

[The real canonical names are suppressed in deference to considerations of public piety and of vested interests.]

Larry looked on impassively, Nicky and Mike were half frightened and extremely puzzled and curious, and Terry went round a rock and rolled over and over on the golden sand, with his soft cap crammed into his mouth to stifle his laughter.

Gaspardo took his hat reverently in both hands and stood it gently on a boulder; then he closed his eyes, folded his hands, bent his head humbly, and prayed in his grand sonorous voice, like the soft-booming of far-off heavily-silvered bronze bells.

"Oh divine Excellencies, grand and illustrious Sanctities! You know me—ha? the little Gaspardo who has often made you laugh, and who has sung to you on moonlight nights on the mountains, knowing you were only yawning your holy heads off up above. Is it not so? And the great candles I have promised you! You know how busy I have been to prevent my buying them, but—altro, altro! You're in no hurry, and there's plenty of time, plenty of time—eh? Now, illustrious, beautiful, charming, sanctified Excellencies, I am in a devil of a predicament. Help me this time, and I give you my word of honour that I will not bother you again—except to sing to you, and tell you the pretty things I hear about you. And, dear, darling, little saintlets—lovely, beneficent, wise and kind! I know that you love your naughty,

faithful, eccentric, good little Gaspardo. Listen, now. I mean it—this time. On the word of a Falti. A candle, thirty lire for the dozen, to each of you—aromatic, nicely coloured, long, fat, of the purest wax. Is it a bargain? Remember—two fifty for each candle! Why, you will have all the other saints green with envy. Get me out of this, send me Tomasso and Belisario, and put me safely on the *Tre Falti*. Now, do not doubt about the candles: have not I said it—ha? Dear beautiful Sanctities—thanks, thanks, thanks, a million times! It's a bargain. Amen!"

He straightened himself with alertness and new-found strength, and looked seaward.

"Ah, look, look! See — my prayers pay!" He pointed to the white sail of a small boat at some distance.

Nicky made a tube of his hands, and gazed, but Terry just cast one careless glance outward, and said that it was Old Shee, the pilot, running out to meet the weekly Cork boat.

Larry had of course, translated to and fro.

A score of furies descended straightway on the spirit of Gaspardo.

He stamped, raved, and cried aloud: then he seized that hat, and squared his accounts with the saints.

"Out you come, serpents, impostors, scorpions, heretics, swindlers! Santa Angosturina — You're no better than you ought to be, and a leprous lot worse—out!"

He went through the ceremony of plucking them out one by one, jerking them contemptuously to the ground, and wiping his feet on them with anger and hate.

"Santa Bianca—the less said about your reputation the better—you viperess—out!

"Santa Vermouta di Torino—you hairless, toothless, wrinkled, evil-smelling old crone—out!

"Santa Marguerita—you painted doll, you betrayer of brave men, you daughter of mules—out!

"Santa Catarina di Velo—you're an old, ugly, yellow washerwoman—a disgusting cat—out!

"Santo Baldachino, we know you—ah, we know you, you protestant old goat—out!

"Santo Rissoto—you glutton, you excommunicated crow, you devourer of honest men's candles—out!

"Santo Spaghetti—poisoner, traitor, secret stabber, financial editor—out!

"Santo Otello—thief, policeman, exciseman, sold to hundred thousand devils—out! Out—the whole false, prison-breaking, masked, fictitious lot of you—who have no existence, and never had—and not enough character amongst you to get credit for ten *scudi*—out you go, and pollute my hat no longer. So, and so, and so! Aha!"

And he jumped on them, and spat on them, and ground them under his feet into utter nothingness.

Then he collapsed, and wept profusely.

"Well," said Nick, "did one ever see the likes of that, now? Quare saints they must be in his counthry, I do be thinking."

"Nicky," said Mike, more awestruck even than surprised, "I tell you what it is. Any dacent Irish saint would be damned before he'd shtand that."

"So I think, Mike. They must be a poor outlandish lot, wid dhivil a bit o' sperrit, to allow thimlike liberties to be took wid thim, bedad!"

"Ah, here comes young Nick," exclaimed Larry.

Sure enough, the boat was standing in, and soon young Nicky was tacking up the channel followed by the Italian boat, which worked in, imitating its leader—both lower-

ing sail and taking to the oars before they reached the pool.

Gaspardo's revulsion of feeling was wonderful to see.

"Ah, dear, darling, beloved little saintlets—most beautiful in heaven! You know that I was only joking. You like me to make you laugh—I am such a clever comedian—ah? No one amuses you like your little Gaspardo; and it's so quiet and tedious and monotonous up there. That's why I feel for you, and play to you like a small theatre all by myself. Thanks—ah, millions of thanks—illustrious Excellencies!"

"And the candles, Gaspardo?" asked Larry.

"Hush!" answered Gassy, with a face of alarm. "Two fifty—each! Ha, ha, ha! Is it likely? A poor beggar like me—and they nauseated with tallow! For it's devilish little wax they sniff for all the grand promises. Two fifty the dozen is more likely. What, each? Why, it would make them as conceited as tenors. Oh, as to promises—*Altro, altro*! But, hush! Don't let them hear. They can keep on fancying that I mean two lire and a half each—until we get to Sicily, and then——"

"But if they're angry——"

"Oh, I can make excuses, and weep, and promise, and promise more—ah! I'm a very prodigal in promises. And they will laugh and say: 'It's our little Gaspardo, *pauvretto*! He's an amusing child, so innocent, so gay, so sincere. Dear little Gaspardo!' and it will be all right, all right—until the next time again—ha?"

He bounded at Tomasso and Belisario, and hugged and kissed them. They laughed lightheartedly at his changed appearance, and volubly vowed that they could not have recognised him had he remained quiet in body and tongue.

"Ah, Signor Tomasso," said Larry, "that reminds me. You must tie Signor Gaspardo hand and foot and keep him

at the bottom of the boat, well-covered by the net—or by the sail, if you really go fishing, and row. And when you get near the ships he must be gagged; one of your neck handkerchiefs will do, securely tied over his mouth. And if he makes any resistance or noise as you come alongside the *Tre Falti*, drop him overboard into the sea—it will be his own fault. Obey."

"*Si, si, si, Signor*," said Tomasso and his son speaking together and with unaffected earnestness. It was business.

Gaspardo protested his absolute dumbness—loudly and at considerable length.

"And, Signor Tomasso, you will not approach the *Tre Falti* until the agreed signals are repeated. Remember—repeated. I am going on board now. I forgot to hint to the noble Signor Capitano to take precautions against any possible shot being fired, in exultation or by accident. Signor Augusto may be indiscreet in the delirious joy of recovering his tenderly-beloved cousin, you know: and a shot would at once bring the police on board."

"*Si, si, si, excellenza. Compreno, illustressimo*," answered Tomasso, with a look of intelligence. "Signor Augusto is overwhelmed with grief, but drunk, drunk because he now owns two-thirds; and has even permitted himself the indelicacy of violence to the noble Signor Capitano and boasted that he would change places when the ship is again out at sea."

"So? Well, I'm not surprised. But, my Tomasso, and you, brave Belisario, Signor Augusto may experience a little astonishment later to-day. Now, remember and obey—to the letter. I must not see Gaspardo depart—I may be questioned. Now, Gaspardo; be sensible, and calm. You are under Tomasso's orders. *Addio!* Come, Mike, and Nicky. We must be off first—and it gives them a piloting lead, besides."

The boys were sent home to look after the lobster-pots, each happy in a half-crown from Larry.

Nicky's boat, with its complement, was soon rowing off, for they could not feel the wind until away from under the beetling headland. They heard much jabbering behind them, but before long, the Italian boat followed.

Nicky's boat, rough as were its equipments, was very fast, and he handled her splendidly. In a short time, she had crept round the bay, dawdled a little on the south side by the Noggin mouth, so as to be observed and suggest a sort of presumptive *alibi*, and then leisurely made for the barque.

They met the Harbour-master's boat in which were seated Sergeant Doyle; a man making notes, so laically made up, that even a lisping babe would have recognised him as a detective; and another whom Nicky knew to be a Custom's rummager.

They had just left the *Tre Falti*.

They had subjected the vessel to a more minute and scientific search, but without result.

"We wanted to ask if the—the criminal had any money on him," said the Sergeant, after beamingly greeting Larry. "His coat was found in the boat with dhivil a sixpence in it. But we couldn't make the ignorant cratures understand."

"Oh, we can put that right," said Larry, "if you turn your boat and come alongside. I'm going on board, as I promised the old Captain."

"Thank ye, sorr. He's a rale, dacent ould boy, and mighty grieved. It's a sevare blow to him, so it is. I wondher whether the murdhering rashcal has escaped—Hiv'n forgive me for being so sarcashtic on an untried man!"

"Well," said Larry, lighting a cigar and passing his case into the other boat, the gunwales being held close together. "If you think that he has, you should employ those active lads of Nick's to seek him. Faith! they'd find a pipe stem if it was anywhere about those rocks and precipices. You try them."

The detective glanced knowingly at the Sergeant, and made a note.

"Bedad!" said the latter, "and that's a good idea intirely. There'll, maybe, be a reward offered. I'll spake to the Inspector about it, Nicky."

"Thank ye kindly, sorr," humbly said Nicky, "and something for the day's wurruk, for I'd have to hire help in their places. An' sure, you're moighty wilcome to all they can do, wid meself thrown in, to counshel an' advige."

The detective made notes.

"Ask him about the drags," suggested the Custom's rummager.

The Sergeant desired Nicky's opinions as to dragging the Creek.

"Well, sorr," said Nicky, scratching his head. "It's a grand plan. There's a moighty pull towards the middle of the Creek, an' it's a moral that anything that's got carried there wull be held fast."

"That's what I said," cut in the rummager.

The detective's pencil was very active.

"What makes ye think that things would be held tight, there?" questioned the Sergeant, judicially.

"Well, sorr, it's just this way. There's thim ould hulks, an' the dredger and the barges and the derilick an' the wreck—all in a line, an' it shtands to rayson as there must be hapes and hills of weed and tanglings o' stuff about the chains and anchors and moorings. An' maybe

many a body as the good God alone knows of, caught and kept there."

The detective was writing very assiduously, and the others exchanged grave looks, whilst Nicky busied himself with his sheets.

"Why don't they shift them, and do something with them, and use that dredger to clean up the bottom?" asked Larry.

They all turned and regarded him with some amazement, detective and all.

Then one remarked that somebody ought to do it; and another said that the Government always neglected them; and a third man observed that some people whom he could name ought to be hanged, on general principles: and the boats drifted alongside the barque.

"Now, sir," said Larry, "what's it you wish to ask?" as the Captain, Augusto, and some others came to the side.

"Ask them, please, what money this Gaspardo Falti had on him at the time of his escape?"

The question was duly translated.

The Captain, after reflection, replied that he must have had a pound or thirty shillings of the ship's money, so far as he could judge from the little purchases he had made on the preceding day. Also, he might, or might not, have had some trifle of his own: he could not say, but he did not think it possible that he could have had much.

At this point Augusto broke in tempestuously with the information that the poor, unhappy, tenderly-loved Gaspardo had a good deal of money on him—much, much, much.

He raised his voice, flung his arms wide, fluttered his fingers until it seemed as if he had a dozen, at the very least, on each hand, and went through a lightning pantomime of counting innumerable coins and bundles of

notes, and stowing them in all sorts of ways and into all sorts of recesses and receptacles on his person.

Larry laughed and translated faithfully, and the detective made voluminous notes.

"How does he know all that?" demanded Sergeant Doyle, with a cloud on his face.

The Captain also sharply regarded his nephew as Larry put the interpreted query.

"Aha!" cried Augusto, his fine voice rolling out richly. "I have searched. It was my dear Gaspardo's—it is mine, now, all mine, all mine. I had the right, *Capo di Bacco!* I opened the box. I find only some few miserable moneys: and I know he had much—much—much. And he's robbed me—the fool, the ass, the mule, the heretic, the irreligious pig! Ha!"

"You're a nice party, you are," said Mike.

"But," the Sergeant caused Larry to say, "How do you know that he's dead? You seem mighty cocksure about it, my little man." He was angry with the fellow, and wroth with himself for being so, but he could not help it.

"Ha, *diavolo!* I have not the proofs. But he is dead officially—and that is enough for me."

The Captain gave him a look like a stab, and the sailors on board turned burning eyes on each other. Augusto spat defiantly into the bay, and swaggered away.

The detective made a few more notes, the Sergeant thanked Larry, the Harbour-master's boat took its passengers to M'Slogan's jetty, and Larry, with Mike and Nicky, went on board—the Captain appointing two men to see that no one interfered with the painter of the boat.

Larry, telling his two friends to keep their eyes on him and to remain otherwise quiet, saw the necessity

of playing warily until the official boat had landed its passengers. He, therefore, chatted with the Captain on that morning's proceedings and other general topics, and they were helped by the appearance in the offing of the Cork steamer whose advance they watched with an interest amounting to eagerness. Larry at once perceived that her arrival would be a useful diversion.

Augusto was persistently obtrusive. He thrust himself beside, and even between, Larry and the Captain, interposed in their conversation, and was rudely assertive and aggressive.

Larry's temper was rising, but he restrained it. Nicky came up, and, pointing to the incoming steamer, suggested that Tomasso should be signalled in so soon as possible, before the steamer came along and flurried or spied or swamped him.

"Signor Capitano," said Larry, "I want a word with you, if the Signor Augusto will excuse us for a moment."

"I do not permit it," said Augusto, arrogantly. "Nothing shall pass or be said on my ship without my knowing it on the first accosting."

"Your ship?" asked Larry. The Captain simply gazed at him but said not a word.

"Yes—yes. Mine, mine: two parts out of three mine—ha!"

"But, Captain Martino is Captain."

"Ha, yes, yes. At present—at present."

"Well, then," said Larry in a resolute tone, holding the Captain's eye, "since that is so, will you, Captain Martino, call your crew together. There is something to be said to them."

"Certainly, Signor, assuredly they shall be summoned."

"But why, why? I object. I protest. My permission has not been accorded. I do not give it. I categorically refuse it. I countermand your order. I revoke it. I——"

"Augusto," said the Captain in a low voice, a red spot on each cheekbone, "go below, until I call you."

"I refuse. My place is here. I am master. I shall reverse our positions."

A quartermaster saluted and said that the crew had mustered, including the two men at Nicky's painter, except the two out fishing, and the *pauvretto*, Gaspardo.

The Captain looked enquiringly at Larry, who said:

"Tell them simply that you place the ship, yourself, and crew at my disposal for what I have to do or say this day—in your interests."

The Captain bowed. As he stepped forward, Augusto did so, too, as if to stop him. But there was a murmur which arrested him, and the Captain's brief statement was sanctioned by a deep and unanimous assent.

They looked expectantly at Larry.

Augusto rushed forward furiously, but Larry held up his hand, and Mike had the first mate pinioned tightly in his powerful hands.

"You are surprised," said Larry addressing the crew, "but do not be alarmed. Everything—mark! I say everything—will be all right within a few hours. Quartermaster; empty the prisoner's pockets; put everything on the deck; also his arms, papers, matches—*tutti, tutti.* He has rifled poor Gaspardo's box; he has insulted your noble Captain; he has threatened and blustered; he has longed for Gaspardo's capture; he has had the presumption and the atrocious bad taste to be impolite to me; he is the enemy of all. I order him into imprisonment for formal enquiry and judgment. You have some pleasant

surprises awaiting you. Captain, please lock up these objects just taken from Augusto's person—we shall hold inquisition later; and appoint a guard over the prisoner, whom please immure tightly in his cabin for the present. His guards will pay for treachery with their windpipes. It is lucid, final, and decreed. Go."

The general jubilation was a tribute to virtue.

Augusto's tears flowed fast and he tried to throw himself at Larry's feet. But he was carried off and locked up.

"Men," continued Larry, the sensational effects being enhanced by his cool, strong bearing, and by the nods and smiles of the Captain, "you will implicitly obey your noble Captain Martino until you get to Palermo. Signor Augusto forgot himself. His conduct was a usurpation. His dealing with Signor Gaspardo's property was an outrage. Why do I say this? Look there —at that little white sail."

All heads turned in the direction he indicated with his finger.

"That is your boat. In it are your Tomasso and your Belisario, and they are bringing you your Signor Gaspardo, alive and well—and free."

With a wave of the hand he subdued the burst of *vivas*, and went on:

"As to Signor Augusto—I now disrate him. Your Captain will deal with him as a man before the mast, or as a prisoner: it is not my affair. At the next ebb some pilots and men will come on board and take the *Tre Falti* out of port. They will surrender the helm and leave you only when your course is clear and easy. Obey orders, keep quiet, show no lights, eat, rest, and devoutly say your prayers. Now — back to your quarters."

Not a man of them but came and, cap in hand, kissed his hand, and genuinely felt that it would be a pride and glory to follow him to the death.

The Captain, dignified and self-mastered as he was, embraced him.

Chapter IV

"NICKY," said Mike, "it's meself doesn't be knowing a little bit of what's forrud here, but it's rale fine, and the Masther's got the grand shtyle of the highest quality, and a thousand toimes the worth of it. But, oh, Nicky, dear, what's this awful didly smell that seems to be breaking bounds and coming at us like a ferocious baste?"

"Sure, it's their late dinner they do be cooking, by all the signs an' tokens."

"Signs an' tokens! Begorra, thin, an' it's a chice an' plazing mixter of ould-forgotten fish an' dhrowned dog an' train-ile an' chemical top-dressing and niglicted cheese an' damp boots an' burnt rags an' sick vinegar an' rotting injins."

Larry came up and explained; but the three of them went to windward, and sweetened the encircling atmosphere with pipes of violent pigtail tobacco.

Larry had told the Captain of the arrangement with Tomasso for the repetition of the signal—which was being properly attended to.

Then the Captain had liqueurs and cigars brought up, and Larry set out Nicky's programme.

Briefly, it was as follows:

The wind, it was pointed out, was blowing steadily off-shore, and likely to freshen in the night; the moon was in her first quarter; and the next ebb would be

running pretty strong between two and three in the morning.

Nicky would then be quietly at hand with half a dozen men of his choosing, and work the barque out; and would either board her, or attach their boats with strong rowers and muffled rowlocks. Of course, the anchor would have to be slipped—a serious loss, no doubt, to be settled somehow with the underwriters.

The Captain smiled.

He had already unshackled the chain cable and substituted a Manilla cable, which he could wind on his well-greased capstan without a creak, rattle or click.

The engines of the Cork boat were beginning to rouse the shore echoes, when Tomasso came alongside, and in a few minutes Gaspardo was being unfastened and the boat hoisted on board.

"Gaspardo," said Larry sternly. "No harlequinade, no theatricals, or hysterics. Be grave. Silence: and no excitement or nonsense. Do you hear? I command it."

Gaspardo looked serious and scared, went subduedly and embraced his uncle, and, in turn, kissed every member of the crew.

"Now," said Nicky reflectively, as he watched this with deep disgust, "is it better to do that or die by the hands of the common hangman, I wondher? I'd rather choose the rope."

"Aye, Nicky, if there was a good dhrop with it—aha! It's the loikes o' me knows the loikes of ye."

"Tomasso," said Larry, "please go and assist Signor Gaspardo to change into proper clothes, and also see that he makes no scene about Signor Augusto's disturbance of his property. This is not the moment."

"And, Tomasso," added the Captain, "under the illustrious Signor's favour, tell Signor Gaspardo that he is

promoted to first mate, and yourself, faithful old friend, second mate."

Tomasso saluted in dignified fashion.

In an instant it flashed into Larry's mind that both he and the Captain were old man-o'-wars' men: and this impression was afterwards verified.

And splendid sailors and marines the Italians make.

The narrator remembers being, when a youth, on terms of friendship with a fine old tar who, as a Neapolitan lad, joined one of Nelson's ships and finally, full of wounds and honour, was laid up at Greenwich Hospital. But that story—and it is one of the historian's very favourite ones—and is true, besides—may be recounted at another time.

"Captain," said Larry laughing, "you must now make your own bargain with this man"—indicating Nicky. "I can have nothing whatever to do with that—not even interpreting. He's an honest man, I can tell you that, and what he undertakes to do he will do. Beyond saying this, I shall not interfere. Don't give him all he asks—and he's not likely to take what you offer; but you must fight it out between you. Come, Mike."

He walked away, after telling Nicky the same thing.

It was amusing to witness the strange contracting parties. The only English word which they seemed to have in common was "sterlings"; but it served as a starting point and standard, the rest was a matter of fingers and dumb motions, helped out by heterogeneous oaths and asides by Nicky, and by piercing looks and quiet gnashings of teeth by the Captain.

If anything, Nicky had some lingual advantages for he exclaimed "altro" and "baney" frequently and appositely, whilst the Captain could muster only an occasional and irrelevant "damme."

The "Tre Falti"

Everything comes to an end, and at last Nicky received a certain number of carefully counted and hesitatingly parted with sovereigns, which he spat on, one by one, and confided to his belt.

Then he conveyed, by an eloquent movement, the idea of the ship being out at sea and bowling along under full sail before daylight.

Nicky was a good deal more than a mere lobster-man. Before he married he had been to sea from boyhood, and he knew his work. He and the Captain had no difficulty in understanding each other in matters of ship work, for their minds ran in the same channel.

The foot of the mainsail was properly laced to the boom and everything made taut and clear aloft; other sails were got ready and running-gear looked over; and the hint to muffle the stops of the capstan and quietly get up anchor, but dropping a couple of bowers, was at once taken, with a dozen of intelligent nods; and execution promised at nightfall.

The time was agreed by Nicky's pointing thereto on his great white watch.

"A last word, my Captain," said Larry; "I hope that you will do no violence to Augusto."

"Excellency," answered Captain Martino, "we can have no secrets from you. I can give you no promise. He will be tried and properly judged by us."

"Ah," said Larry, with a sigh.

"Nay, noble Signor, it shall be regular and calm and merciful if possible. Come: stay and witness it yourself. It shall be now."

"I! No, no. And yet—perhaps—" He knitted his brows in grave, even anxious, reflection. "He's a dead man," said he to himself, "if left to them. I may prevent another murder—a cold-blooded one, this time."

He raised his thoughtful face and, in a few words, assented.

The Captain gave some orders in a low tone. All hands looked serious and bustled about in silence.

Within less than a quarter of an hour a sufficient space had been cleared in the ship's waist, the Neapolitan, Papal and Italian flags rigged to enclose a small square, some seats placed, and a crucifix, crossed cutlasses, and other mountings or emblems fixed up at the back.

The Captain took the central seat. Gaspardo, who looked pale, collected and implacable, sat on the right side; Tomasso, with an air of grief on his fine old Roman face, sat on the left; in front, according to rank and seniority, squatted the rest of the crew, except Augusto's guards, who were still below.

Breaking a stillness in which the men's breathing was plainly heard, the Captain ordered the prisoner to be brought up.

Larry, with his two friends, stood apart. He had enjoined them to see and hear without a word or a motion.

When Augusto, with arms still bound, appeared between his escort, he seemed to take in the full significance of the scene at a glance.

But he bore himself bravely, uttered one simple "Ah!" bowed to the Court, and stepped, as if quite familiar with the usage, into the circle, where he stood, pale but with head erect. There was no sign of fear, nor of braggadocio; it was to him, apparently, as solemn and properly-constituted a tribunal as any most ceremonious and fearsome Court Royal could be. He accepted the situation like a man, a gambler, a stoic, a philosopher and a sworn brother of a secret confederation.

To the charge of treachery there could be no answer

and denial was futile. It was not even attempted. Augusto flushed and bent his head. Every hand was held up against him, thumb down as in the old Roman circuses, to the accompaniment of a hoarse snarling growl.

The second charge, that of trying to rob a comrade, or at all events, to snatch at his share of property or profit, was equally unanswerable, but it evoked more lively indignation. The men roared at him, ground their jaws, shook their fists, and made as if seeking their knives—until the Captain held up a warning hand, when they quieted down to flashing looks of hate and vengefulness.

The prisoner beheld but did not flinch, and it was an astonishment to the onlookers that Gaspardo remained so restrained and calm. The decision of the Court was unanimous: the prisoner was guilty.

"So say you all?"

"So say we all—all," as with one voice.

"And your sentence?"

"Death!" The dread word rung out, subdued but with frightful promptitude and unison.

"Augusto Falti: your comrades have found you guilty: they have adjudged you to death. The verdict is just."

"The verdict is just," repeated Augusto, in a low unshaking tone, in his magnificent voice.

"And the sentence is—Death. It is also just."

"The sentence is also just," repeated Augusto with astounding steadiness and dignity.

Gaspardo rose and flung his arms round Augusto's neck, and sobbed on his shoulder.

"My poor, mistaken, impetuous Augusto, Oh, I am heart-broken. It is the drop of greed in the blood from your mainland mother: the rest of thy Falti heart is noble and good. Tell me, brother of my soul, what can I do for any wishes thou hast—anything, anything?"

He rolled a cigarette, lit it and placed it between Augusto's lips. At a sign from the Captain one arm was freed.

"And oh, maledictions! it is my hand that must give thee the fatal blow—and with thy poniard: for it is the law."

"Yes, Gaspardo, *mio caro*, it is the law. I am content. It was a mistake: I regret it. Finally, it is done, by Bacchus! Listen then."

"I listen, my cousin, my tenderly-loved, I listen: and thou hast barely half an hour left."

"At Palermo," spoke Augusto: the fortitude of the man was something wonderful: "At Palermo dwells Lisetta: thou knowest her brothers. Give her my deeply-cherished love. When I was being washed over-board —for it was an accident——"

"Certainly, an accident. Washed overboard," responded his cousin.

"When I was washed overboard, and was sinking, the last sound I uttered was—Lisetta. And thou wilt give her my gold chain and charms."

Gaspardo made a business-like note, and nodded.

"And there's also Estella, the pilot's youngest daughter, she must have the locket and my books. Tell her that I thought and spoke only of her, and that I kissed her beautiful gift to me,which I always wore next my heart —you will find it with other things in my bag—at the instant when I surrendered my soul to God."

"I shall tell her, my dear Augusto—faithfully," vowed the greatly-affected Gaspardo.

"And you know the sweet and fairy-like Rosina—our good priest's niece." Here he whispered and his cousin nodded; and then he thought of others, each the sole queen of his heart, with loving messages and keepsakes to all.

Then, as he was about to be led away, after touching farewells, from his uncle downwards, the scene changed startlingly, for Larry stepped forward, towering even above the Captain, held up his right arm, and cried "Halt!"

"Let the Court reassemble!" he cried sternly.

"Illustrious Sir, Excellency and Noble Benefactor," began the Captain. "We have acted according to our law —the law of our brotherhood which is older than most State laws—the law of the mountains of which we are natives. We are the unconquered: the sons of the old Greeks. Roman and Saracen and Spaniard and Italian have passed over Sicily: but we are the old Sicilians, the owner-race, the undefiled, the free. Other laws for others: our's for ourselves."

Approval was graphic and fierce, but Larry was unmoved.

"I do not dispute it, Signor Capitano, and you brave Sicilians; and I do not interfere with it. But, look round you. This is Ballynoggin and not Palermo, Ireland and not Sicily. It is for me to declare the law here, as it is for you to declare it in your country. Your flags give you no jurisdiction here: that—" pointing to the Custom House —"that is the only flag which rules here."

There were mutterings and hostile gestures, which observing, Mike and Nicky moved forward. Larry waved them back, and proceeded:

"I have a solution that will satisfy you and everybody, and will be free from danger, or violence, or complication. Listen, calmly, for I am your friend much more than you think."

They squatted around — the Captain and his mates resuming their chairs, but all looking darkly, and Augusto impassive almost to indifference.

"Signor Capitano—answer me. What is the value of Augusto's share in the ship and venture? A fair price to buy at or to sell at?"

There was general surprise, conjecture, and a quiet consultation between the Captain and Gaspardo.

"What does Augusto say?" asked the Captain.

The prisoner corrugated his brow, cyphered with the fingers of his free hand in the air, and with those of the bound one behind his back, and, after a while said:

"Twenty thousand lire."

The Captain and Gaspardo read the notes they had made. They agreed the figures at fifteen thousand.

"Gaspardo," said Larry, "if you had money would you buy at fifteen."

"Perhaps—not more."

"And, if you had an offer now, would you sell at fifteen."

"*Si*—not less."

"Then I adjudge the price at fifteen thousand lire. Signor Capitano: I presume that Gaspardo has not that sum available. I propose that Gaspardo shall give you a mortgage writing on both shares—two-thirds of the whole: that Augusto shall sign off his share to his cousin; and that you shall advance, or guarantee the money to Augusto. Also, that the expenses which you are incurring now be borne and paid you by Gaspardo. Also, that Augusto be allowed to take his own personal belongings and papers, including his formal discharge, and that he be put on shore safely, somewhere off the coast, or be placed in a suitable boat with provisions and water, in the track of ships not more than a dozen miles from the shore. Also, that you all give me your word of honour, as men of the mountain and good Catholics, as we are, not to injure him, nor retain his things. Lastly, that he swear not to disclose the

escape of Gaspardo, and stick to his one story of having had a quarrel and insisted on leaving the ship. And he must remain in close custody, bound and guarded, until the ship is at sea."

It was a long time before the excited discussions ended.

"But he is a dead man if ever he is found in Italy," said the men, as if in chorus, and the officers confirmed it.

"And he will be a dead man here if he proves a traitor or loose-tongued—a fool, a knave, or a perjuror."

They liked that amazingly, and showed much approving but unamiable kindling eye and gritting tooth and clutching claw.

"Some day I may visit you in Sicily," added Larry, relaxing smilingly.

"*Io!* You are free of the mountain and of the island," came the reply in a shout. "And woe to him who touches a thread or a *scudo* of your's; or attempts any hurt to your body or life, Excellency—by the word and the sign! Signor Capitano, be pleased to give them to our illustrious and never-to-be-forgotten friend and benefactor—this splendid Englishman."

"Now, if they'd only had the sense to say Irishman: but, sure, they don't know the difference—and, if they did, they'd likely be puzzled and think worse—the ignorant cut-throats that they are! But they're fine fellows all the same, bedad!" mused Larry.

The Captain solemnly, but secretly, gave him a password and hand-grip. He whispered a message to a sailor who dived below and reappeared with an old-fashioned Oriental-looking curved dagger in appropriate sheath, and with a belt-attachment bearing strange symbols and inscriptions. This, with much ceremony and in a few complimentary sentences uttered with great impressiveness

and sincerity, he presented to Larry, who in return took a valuable pin from his scarf and himself stuck it in that of the Captain's, amidst the enthusiastic *vivas* of the crew, and to the delight of Nicky and Mike.

Then, after a parting glass, and good wishes, and more *vivas*, Larry and his friends left the *Tre Falti*—Nicky having taken a last look round at the preparations for the start, and confirmed, finger on watch, the appointment for the small hours of the following morning.

"The Custom House Quay, Nicky," said Larry, when they were rowing to shore. "We must call all possible attention to ourselves. Mike and I will have some dinner at the Royal and hire a trap to take us to Baleila, where we'll pass the night—and take care they know we're there, begorra! To-morrow we'll come in and take the afternoon boat to Cork for a few days. What do you say to that, Mike, you sowl?"

"Faith then, Larry, I'm just in that state that I want straightening out somehow, for the moind o' me is in a dhivil of a confusion and a crumple after these two days. I don't know rightly if I'm aslape or awake."

"That's you, Mike. And, troth! I've gone through so much business, and seriousness of one sort or another, that I want to go to bed for a week or else have a gehenna of a shindy or a spree to put me right. And that reminds me, there's a theatre company in Cork for three nights."

"Yes, Larry, and there's thim spurs for the burruds—"

"Of course. Glad you thought of it. That's most important."

It must be set down here that Larry had brought with him a cruel lust for and taste in cock-fighting, for which purpose he and Mike had a number of birds in course of education and physical preparation. He wanted some

horrible spurs of the Spanish fashion, and he and Mike had resolved to see to that nicely-momentous matter in Cork, Larry furnishing the descriptions and drawings.

"Nicky," said Larry, warningly, "on your life don't tell me a thing about what's forward—now or at any time. Or any one else, more by rayson. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sorr. An' I'd let meself be cut up into shmall shtrips for bait before I'd say or do a mortial thing to displaze ye—for you're a prince of a man, an' I'd give a pound to the won who dishputes that same, for the pride an' happiness of breaking his hid, or getting me own bruk in that cause, more pow'r to 't! Begorra, and bedad, an' be jabers, huroo!"

"Larry," remarked Mike, almost worshippingly, "an' it's a moighty lot o' mony this has cost ye, besoides the talent an' the hid work and the nobleness an' the glorious pluck of it all."

"Hush, Mike, hush! What's a few miserable pounds to the saving of a man's life—or even his liberty. A man like Gaspardo—with no more thought than a young girl, and no more feeling of responsibility for what he's done, and a good deal less of intention beforehand, than a boy robbing an apple-tree. And as to Augusto—well, yes, we managed that, but it was a sort of, what d'you call it? Oh, a sort of fluke—not worth talking about. Here we are: easy, Nicky. Hold fast. That's it. Good-bye, Nick. Come Mike, for I'm as hungry as a jaguar."

* * * * *

Next morning the familiar mooring place of the *Tre Falti* reflected the glancing dancing sunlight, but Ballynoggin missed the barque, and nobody knew anything about her departure.

"Stole away!" said the Superintendent when he heard

the news. "I hope that's the last of her and all her precious crew!"

But that hope was destined to be unfulfilled.

Chapter V

THREE days later Larry and Mike, who had enjoyed themselves greatly in Cork and renewed some of the ancient friendships but not the warfares of the time when the latter first met the former on his arrival in Ireland—a time that seemed now in distant perspective—were run down at Queenstown just as they were about to embark on a trip to Liverpool.

It was, however, nothing more alarming than a subpœna to attend the Petty Sessions Court at Ballynoggin to give testimony in the charge of Our Sovereign Lady the Queen against Falti for wilful murder and some alternative accusations.

Enquiries at the Cork Police Office, where he was treated with much civility, elicited the information that a boat had been picked up off Bantry Bay with a solitary occupant, a foreigner, who was taken on board the collier which was carrying supplies to the warships in that bay.

As police notices had been sent from Ballynoggin with descriptions of the criminal fugitive, there was no loss of time, nor any excessive formalities, in sending the man, securely guarded, to Ballynoggin, where he was promptly charged, searched and put into a cell; and, on the following morning, brought before the Magistaates and remanded.

"I do not think," said Larry thoughtfully, whilst chatting to the Cork Inspector, "that I should act as

Interpreter now that I am summoned as a witness. Even if it is regular—and I don't see that it can be—I should not like it for my own sake."

The Inspector looked at him with some surprise. He remembered the riots and ructions in which Larry had figured some months ago, and he was scarcely prepared for this sedate and reasonable representation.

A police clerk slipped a paper to him. It was a letter from the Superintendent at Ballynoggin, which covered the despatch of the subpœna, in which he spoke of Mr O'Gra as a remarkably smart and gentlemanly young fellow, who had rendered them very good service indeed, both inside the Court and outside of it.

"You are quite right, sir," said the Inspector, with much respect.

"Cannot you find some man here in Cork—there's none in Ballynoggin except myself, and I am out of the question —who speaks Italian and English?"

The Inspector conferred with some of his officers, and Larry whispered to Mike:

"Begorra, then, Mike, but the fun's not over yet. I see a lot more coming, for it's Gusty they've got and they think it's Gassy."

Mike give him a delighted look and furtively slapped his leg. He would have done a bit of doubleshuffle, but the place forbade. And it may here be pointed out that Larry's diction had been greatly purified and improved since he had been in Father Blount's hands, and it was only in moments of familiar unreserve or wildness that he reverted to his natural idioms and brogue.

"There's that old music-teacher in the room over Widow Nolan's haberdashery. Zanelli's the name. A starved, still, sober man that seems to earn next to

nothing, and lives on it, bedad! somehow—and walks like a lord," said a constable.

"Fetch him. Don't frighten him. Tell him it's maybe a job of translating:—and a little bit of money would be a godsend to him. Let him come on alone," said the Inspector, adding to Larry, "you will be able to judge, sir, if he'll do. I have no doubt he'll be quite willing."

Signor Zanelli was perfectly competent, and composedly eager; and the Inspector at once telegraphed to Ballynoggin, with the result that Signor Zanelli, Larry, and Mike travelled together by that morning's train to the western port.

"The poor beggar must have a lawyer, Larry," said Mike.

"Yes; and he's got the money to buy one—or will have."

"How's one to be got?"

"Well, there's Lawyer Kennada — him as Father O'Kay knows well, an' as my mother employs at times——"

"Oh, very well then. You bring him to the Court, when we get to the town, and I'll see if I can get leave to speak to Gusty—bad lot as he is—and tell him. Anyway, he shall have a lawyer, if I'm to buy one myself, bedad!"

"That's you, Larry," said Mike admiringly.

The hearings were long and tedious, and the remands frequent: but, at length, the identity of Augusto was established for all practicable purposes, though not without great difficulty; for prosecuting Crown Counsel were sent down from Dublin, and Mr Kennada was not going to let them be defeated too briefly or too easily. He wanted plenty of stress and strain of con-

flict; of traps, surprises and skirmishings; of false moves and striking triumphs; of arguments and the play of wit and flow of rhetoric, as well as of superabundant evidence.

In the end, the accused was ordered to be discharged, in spite of the vehement and impassioned periods of the Dublin barristers who asserted that the identity and guilt of the prisoner were as clear as the sun at noon. Mr Kennada, in turn, poured out upon them a superheated stream of sarcasm and derision—taunting them with ignorance of their own case and inability to grasp their own points, or to see whither their reasonings tended or what their theories implied; and how every argument of theirs, pointed to a different conclusion, which they had missed; and every conclusion required a different argument, which they had forgotten to supply: and much more in the same fluent vein.

Of course, he obtained immense credit and applause—the crowning glory being in the underlying impression that he created that the Italian was a good deal more guilty than the Crown had tried to prove, and that he had snatched away their prey—not because of innocence, but in spite of guilt—by his forensic prowess.

Mr Kennada was loudly cheered in the Market Square, in which the Court-house—part of the Townhall—stood: Augusto was carried shoulder-high, and, later in the day, there was a demonstration, with a cornet and drum, outside the dingy little inn in the square to which a constable had directed him, and where he took up his temporary abode: and Larry slipped out by a side-door and carried off Signor Zanelli and Father O'Kay to dinner at the Royal Hotel.

Augusto became a hero in the town. He kept himself quiet, and it was rumoured that he had opened a banking account and seemed in no hurry to leave the town.

Before a week had passed he was joined by another Italian who spoke English ungrammatically and easily. It was another cousin of his—a waiter in London for whom he had sent.

It was not long—to cut this rambling story short—before Augusto became the owner of the down-at-heel and dirty little inn in which he lived, which was soon transformed into an attractive restaurant—the drinking part being kept distinct from the other. Captain Martino had kept faith as to the money.

He became at once mightily popular: and the *navarin de mouton* which he introduced was spoken of and sought after far and wide.

He quickly picked up a working knowledge of the language, and before six months had elapsed, an adjoining empty store was added to his premises. In the evenings, the linen was taken off the little tables in the long room, and Signor Zanelli played on a piano on a little platform, and Augusto sang, and strummed, and did southern dances. So profits rolled in, the police looked on benevolently, and Augusto Falti became Augustus Foley, the husband of a handsome and buxom Irish wife and, through her, related to nearly three-eighths of the population.

He, one day hinted, to Mr Kennada that he would like to have his innocence more perfectly and publicly established, for he was the recipient of perpetual congratulations on his prompt vindication of piety, and on his luck in having such clever aids as Larry and lawyer Kennada.

"Look here, Gusty," said that astute solicitor. "You leave things alone, if you don't want to be ruined and kicked out of the town as an ignoble impostor. If your innocence were proved, why, man alive! you'd lose your character, that's what you'd do, bedad! You'd lose your character, and not a crature would respect you to the

value of a twopenny curse. See that, now, and hould your silly tongue."

Augustus Foley became a Town councillor, and Signor Zanelli took up his residence in Ballynoggin, in a condition of peace of mind and bread, with fifteen shillings weekly certain—ten from Gusty for two hours nightly, and five from Larry for playing at High Mass every Sunday in the Chapel at Kilmacartie—which was itself affluence, apart from private tuition, translations or other opportunities.

It was comical to hear Augustus—who developed into a jovial, good-hearted, shrewd fellow and fervid Irish patriot—talk with a massive West-country brogue and roll his begorrrrra's and broaden his bedada's.

The silver cup which Larry had to bestow when the infant Augustus Larry Foley "came to the fore" remains exhibited in a conspicuous place of honour in Councillor Foley's Restaurant.

* * * * *

So ends the rambling story of Gassy and Gusty.

That Little Cad

Chapter I

In the long dull road running inland from Ballynoggin—for some distance parallel with the river—stood a pair of semi-detached but mean-looking little villas known as Ivy Cottages.

Each had a scrap of yard-cum-garden behind it, both spaces backing on a spacious and richly weed-grown wharf on which rose the wreck of a signboard whose remaining legible letters informed the painstaking reader that John Cairney dealt in coals, bricks, cement, stone, slates, etc.

But everybody knew that this was but a legend: the premises might have been explored minutely without discovery of even a sample of the substances set forth.

Mr Cairney's office was in the front palour of No. 1. Its window held a battered wire-blind with part of the title of an Insurance Company thereon; its portal bore a small though dingy plate on which his name dimly appeared.

Yet slack, if not dead, as seemed the coal and building trading, and obtrusively void of display as was the poor little house with its torn and faded wire-blind and unpolished name-plate, Mr Cairney carried on a good deal of business of a nature so quiet that it almost bordered on mystery.

For it was scarcely credible that any epidemic of forethought would be so lasting, and so eccentric, as to bring to him so many anxious-looking farmers, careless-looking

officers, responsible-looking solicitors, shamefaced-looking traders, defiant squireens, haughty Quality, and others, for the sole purpose of insuring their lives or property.

Mr Cairney's merchandise was—money. He lent it, and he was known in select circles as a hard man, but just in his dealings—on his own terms.

He had married the widow of his employer, the coal and brick merchant. She brought him the pair of cottages, the wharf with the modest stock in hand, and her infant daughter. Then she produced young John Cairney and died when he was some three years old.

Mr Cairney began, innocently enough, by making small advances, well secured, to builders who bought materials from him. These, by reason of methods well-established in such matters, turning out very profitably, he soon relinquished the commercial department and devoted his keen cold mind to the purely financial one.

So much for the preamble.

At this point, his step-daughter, Alice Gorman, was about five and twenty, and his son, John, about two years younger.

John was an auctioneer's clerk in the town, and contributed twelve shillings weekly, out of his salary of eighteen, for his board and lodging.

Alice was cook, working-housekeeper and general utility. She had the help of a very small girl, who went home to sleep, and whose uncostly employment was sanctioned chiefly because somebody had to attend to the front door.

The household was run on severely economical principles —mitigated, in some degree, by frequent presents, from grateful or propitiating clients, of butter, eggs, poultry, bacon, potatoes and other small farm produce.

These Mr Cairney always tried to assess—when he had

the chance—and to deduct for: but, on the whole, the exchanges ruled, on balance, in favour of Alice.

She was a cheerful, healthy, good-looking girl, and earned her very moderate dress-money by lace-making in such spare time as her numerous and almost constant duties left her.

Now, Mr Cairney had for a long time suffered from a physically weak heart, and at the period when this plain little story really begins he knew that the end was rapidly approaching. The two leading physicians of the town had just told him that it might be a question of hours, or of days—with odds on the former.

He walked calmly home, sent out the wee servant for a whole bottle of Hennessy's brandy, lit his pipe, and with perfect composure wrote some letters and busied himself until supper time with his books and papers.

Next morning, after the early but frugal breakfast, Mr Cairney told his son that he wished to speak to him and that he had arranged for his not going to his business, as usual—for the present, at all events.

John's heart fell. He bethought himself, with a quick pang, of his debts—fully three pounds odd; and of his sweetheart, Cecily Dermott, of next door; and of other possible misdemeanours in the way of a gold scarf pin, a gorgeously brazen watch-chain, and some furtive billiards.

So he followed heavily to the parlour-office—which his father always kept locked in his absence, and forbidden when at home: inasmuch as he made neither friend nor confidant of his son and scarcely ever spoke to him save in admonitions that were snarls, or comments that were sneers, or complaints that were arraignments—chiefly as to his extravagant habits and general imbecility, according to his own conception of useful brain power.

The interview was startling and momentous.

"John," began Mr Cairney, "I want you to listen to me carefully, and not interrupt. You needn't make any notes, for I've got everything in order."

"Yes, sir," said John, gravely and fearfully, for a sudden premonition struck him. He had not before noticed it, but he now saw that his father looked worn, wasted, and weak.

The elder Cairney read his son's mind in his eye.

"That is it, John," he said, unemotionally. "I am going—fast. A man's like a bill; it's short breathing when the term's matured and only the days of grace left; for they run off while you think of them. That's the case, precisely, now with me."

Young John was suffering in his way, for his heart was moving, and he could almost have thrown his arms around his father's neck, as he still remembered doing when a tiny boy: but he felt awkward and ashamed.

"Father," he said, with a bit of tremble of lip and voice, "I—I wish I'd noticed sooner that you were unwell. I might have helped you—no, not here, not business. I mean—looked after you, you know. But you never complained, and I neglected—I—I——"

"John," answered his father, with a softened look, "perhaps I'm to blame, not you. Looking at you now, it comes on me almost as a surprise that you're a man, and I've always treated you as a boy—a mere raw lad. I—I almost wish now that it might be possible to hold over—for me to live a little longer—so that you and I might really make each other's acquaintance: but that's out of the question, out of the question on any terms. So now, listen:—

"I've made all arrangements. My Will is in the larger safe; but I don't believe in throwing more money away than can be avoided in paying Government duty, so I've

had transferred to you, on deposit account, the bulk of my uninvested money. I have endorsed to you whatever passes in that manner; there are conveyances into your name of properties, mortgages, and the like, and transfers, duly executed, of bonds and shares. The date is filled in, too, and everything is in order, with specific instructions as to what is to be done, or not done, with each item. Everything else passes by the Will.

He took what he called a spot of brandy, and went on —his son's head being in a whirl.

"It will total up, after all outgoings, to something over thirty-five thousand pounds—thirty-five—thousand —pounds."

He lingered on the figures almost gloatingly, and experienced something like disgust when he saw that they evoked no enthusiasm, and but little interest in his son. He was just forming the reflection — "I always said he was a fool"—when young John cried:

"Oh, to h—— with the money, father! Don't talk of it. Oh, you are not so bad as you say! Surely, the doctors—care—rest—" and then he broke down and covered his face with his hands, whilst he shook with his sobs.

"It's too late, my son," said his father, with a feeling that he thought had been dead in his heart for a score of years. "But—but I'm glad and proud, now, that I have a son. I've had no pleasure in my money, except in the making it. I've had the anxiety and the toil: I don't grudge it now, my boy—for you will have it. Now," becoming cool and businesslike once more, "listen, and let us get to the end, for the sheriff may be in at any moment—I mean, my summons is on the way, and I shall have to accept short service when it comes.

"I have, for some time past, drawn in my business and

invested my money. There is now only some six or seven thousand pounds outstanding. You are not to carry on the business for one single day. This is absolute. You've not got the head for it, nor the experience. Mind now, this is absolute. Not a single transaction is to be renewed on any condition whatever. Every one has my instructions attached—where you may give a little time, and how much, and where you must refuse. In every case, you must follow my orders to the letter. Let no appeals, promises, or payments tempt you. Your simple answer must be that you have no discretion—your instructions are precise and inflexible."

John heard, without much attention, and nodded assent.

"Next," pursued Mr Cairney, "don't set up to be a gentleman, or be consorting with the like. You've not the education, nor the training: manners are soon learnt, it's not that; the training is in keeping your head at all times, and smiling, and never saying what you think, and all that. By the time you've learnt that lesson—if you've the folly to try it—you will have a useless knowledge for your pains, and your teachers will have your money, and only contempt for you."

"Yes, father," said John.

"Stick to business: it's healthy, and fit for you, and keeps you in a wholesome rut. Make money—it's a right and useful thing to do, if done rightly. And, in the years to come, you will marry and, please God! have sons, and then you may use your riches and make gentlemen of them, and start them so in early life: send them to college, and back them with your money, and have your solid glory and satisfaction that way. Do you mind now, John?"

"Yes, father," again answered John, this time rather

absently, for Cecily Dermott suddenly came before his mind, and was weighed and dismissed in a fraction of a second.

Some directions followed as to the depositing of deeds and securities at the bank; as to the funeral arrangements, and other minor matters.

Then John remembered something.

"And Lally, father?" asked he.

"That's all right, John. Folio 31 in the private ledger. I treat her as a creditor and not as a legatee; to save duty, you know. She's no claim on me, of course, but I prefer to give her all her mother brought me. These houses—you will find the executed conveyance to her in the safe—go to her, and she stands credited with the rents, less outgoings, and the value at cost of her father's stock, less debts and expenses. I debit her keep and schooling and so forth, but I credit her with fair interest and something for house-service these past few years. I had debited the account with the moiety of her mother's funeral expenses—but I crossed that entry yesterday. The total in her favour—besides the houses and the contents of this one, except your things and what's in this room—works out at £1038, and some odd shillings and pence. Add for a keepsake and black frock and bonnet, and it's squared at £1050. But it is not to be told to her, nor paid to her, for three months after my death, mind. Why? Well, one reason is that you may want to keep this house going for that time, at least——"

"I see," said John.

Then Mr Cairney explained his inventories and lists; the docketed bundles of securities; the books and the instructions; the bank-books; the money and things in the safe; the deeds; the Will; the note-books; the names of his local and Dublin solicitors, etc., etc.—all in perfect

order. He was a very systematic man, and had never employed a clerk.

Finally, he drank another spot of brandy, and bade John take a walk whilst he took a little rest. There was yet an hour to the one o'clock dinner.

But that meal was never eaten by them that day.

For, when John returned, his father was sitting in his easy chair, dead—with a smile on his face, and in his hands an old faded daguerotype of his wife and John, then a baby, on her lap.

* * * * *

For about a week after the quiet funeral John secluded himself from everybody, except his half-sister.

He did not brood, nor busy himself over his affairs; for the most part, he nursed his head in his hands, with elbows on the table, or simply smoked and read, and took long country walks at night only. He would see no one—not even the Dermotts; nor answer letters, nor give appointments.

Alice at one moment feared that his sudden fortune had affected his mind; but she soon perceived that he was really grieved, and not a little stupefied.

So, woman-like, she said little and observed much, and was in no wise alarmed.

Then, moodily enough, he became accessible to callers.

It almost looked like an organised descent upon him, from all quarters, of people wanting to borrow money; to sell him properties; to interest him in schemes and patents; to suggest partnerships, or inspire ambitions. But they departed with blank and wondering faces—some angry, some contemptuous, some incredulous—with young Mr Cairney's reply in their ears:

"My father's business is being wound up. There will be no new business."

When this formula had been repeated, perhaps several times, without change, on some of the parties attempting to argue, banter or coax, it became forcible as regards the hearers and somewhat trying as regards the speaker.

It was humanly inevitable that—especially in view of his life hitherto, his obscurity, poverty and general insignificance—a sense of importance should now rise in his bosom. He was rich, he had power, he was asked for help and favours, he was Mr Cairney.

And he felt a something aroused in response, as if it had slept until now, which told him half angrily that he had been most unfairly kept down and under; and, more than half proudly, that he was the equal of anybody, and that he could buy up a dozen or more of the men whom he had been in the habit of looking up to, in the town.

But the feeling of elation was clouded when any officers called about advances or renewals. Vainly he essayed imitation of their ease of manner, or hauteur, or coolness, or off-handedness, or indifference.

"Ah!" he would sigh, when alone. "If I had only had more chances! I could have done with less money. It's grand to be a gentleman. Why shouldn't I be one?"

He resolved to go to Dublin—perhaps, London—for a short time, so soon as he could make the necessary arrangements in connection with the outstanding matters of his father's estate.

"There are too many people here," said he to himself, "who have always called me John—simply, John. And there are lots that I don't want to have anything more to do with—now. And then there's——

"She's a nice enough girl is Cecily Dermott, and Tom is a nice enough fellow; and it would have been right

enough at one time: but now—— Oh, I must end it all, now; and going away's the thing, and no writing nor explaining. Meantime, I'll give few opportunities to anybody to see me, or speak to me — except on business matters."

* * * * *

Now, when a man is in the mood to tempt the Tempter, the means glide swiftly to hand. Some people call them coincidences; but this is an evasion; for opportunity, and facility do not spring of their own accord, but are like sound answering touch on stringed instruments. There is more than one cares to admit in the Devil's temporal sovereignty.

Captain Fferroll and the Honble Fermough Lant called on John Cairney.

The Captain was a fiercely-proud man with a severe air and a white moustache. He was of the oldest County aristocracy, had gone through all his means, and was living with his maiden sister in the neighbourhood.

The Honble F. Lant was a handsome, self-assured, extremely well-dressed man of about thirty—possibly, less. Mr Cairney knew all about the case; it was marked "No terms. Must be paid." Judgment had already been signed for the debt, interest and costs—over £1200, but it had been held over, on some security being given, for a period of which a couple of months had yet to run. The endorsement bore a note that the arrangement was purely verbal, and that the elder Mr Cairney's word was given on the understanding that this further indulgence was final, and that none of the obligants must prejudice the creditor's security in any way.

All this rapidly passed through Cairney's mind as the Captain scowlingly took a chair, and as Mr Lant greeted

him with unstudied affability not unmixed with a touch of patronage.

After a brief remark or two—in good enough taste—about his father, Cairney almost tingled when Lant remarked in an easy tone:

"Got leave, of course, under the circumstances. When do you rejoin?"

Cairney had to admit that he was not in the Service.

Lant was surprised—never was so astonished in his life. Why, he had the look and cut of a well set-up officer all over him. Didn't the Captain think so?

The Captain frowned and assented—with the muttered addition, strictly to himself—"Yes, by Jove! On sentry go."

Cairney felt flattered: and then Lant, almost as if it were an afterthought, alluded to the little matter of business with the deceased gentleman.

"Of course, I'm not going to talk over these trumpery things with you. You're not carrying on——"

"No, I certainly am not. It is being wound up, for good and all."

"Congratulate you, dear old chap. You're much too dashed thoroughbred for this sort of thing. As likely make me a pawnbroker, ha, ha! I suppose you get your blood on the other side——"

"My mother was a Driscoll-Hone," said Cairney, vaguely and tentatively—trying to get away from the Cairney strain and to mount to the opinion of his visitor.

"You don't say that? You really do not mean deliberately to say that?" queried Mr Lant, in sudden excitement.

"Oh, yes—it's perfectly right," answered Cairney with more confidence now that he had struck a correct

note, which, moreover, was also true; and he felt himself on a higher plane of being.

"Then all I can say is," exclaimed Mr Lant, "that this is the most extraordinary discovery in the world, for I'm more than half a Driscoll-Hone myself—my father and mother were second cousins, you know. John, you have some of the best blood in Munster in your veins—and you belong to us. Con-found it all! It's the most curious find I ever made in my life; and in our own family, too!"

The Captain blinked and said that nothing surprised him, and that it was all deuced funny—very.

Cairney controlled himself, but he was filled with elation, and with contempt for his past and present surroundings. He now, at a flash, understood that the aspirations, discontents, dreams, and rebellings against the limitations of his lot, in the years gone by, were but the stirrings of the nobler fluid in his circulation.

"Oh, drop all this wretched business—ah, I remember, you said you intended to do so. Glad of it. And get out of this deadly hole. Why, they can't even clothe you decently. Look at your things! I tell you what. Come up to Dublin."

John admitted that he had just resolved to go there.

"That's the thing. See something: be somebody. Anyway, get into decent clothes, and see something of men and the world. Daresay, we can manage a Militia or Yeomanry Commission for you. Come straight to my rooms—here's my card. I'm staying down here, with my friend Captain Fferroll, but I shall leave to-morrow or next day. Good-bye, Jack. Mind you come to me. And, by the way, bring those dashed papers with you. I want to settle it up, anyway—and now more than ever. Never do, you know, for any

confounded matter of business to be between us now, would it? Ha, ha!"

The Captain gasped and gurgled and glared, and eventually he held out a fish-cold but nerveless hand to young Cairney and followed his lively and effusive companion into the street. Whence they made their way to the County Club.

Chapter II

Mr Cairney was now in his seventh or eighth week of residence in Dublin, and was getting splendidly miserable and wearied.

When he left Ballynoggin he gave Lally £20, for household expenses and told her that he would send more when that was done. He was going to Dublin on business, he said, and he anticipated any remarks of her's by requesting her not to speak about any person or thing—except the house and herself.

He was now in fashionable rooms, well-dressed and jewelled, with a horse (he was taking riding lessons) which he detested, a valet whom he feared, invitations that he was beginning to mistrust, and tradesmen's bills that he was too often unable to understand.

Mr Fermough Lant took entire charge of him. He introduced him to his own tailor, bootmaker, hosier, hatter, saddler, wine merchant; to numerous aristocratic, dramatic, sportive and other friends; and, with delicate but not undue regard to Cairney's mourning, inducted him into choice card parties and pleasant little suppers and quiet drives, and fair as well as rollicking companionships.

These things may have graven lines of experience for

use in after years, but, during the process, Mr Cairney did not shine. He was so flattered, he was so convinced that he was naturally as good as the best of them, he so felt the power of his money, that he, almost aggressively, took his own equality, if not superiority, for granted; and he made up for want of tact and ease of manner by a loud assertiveness which seemed to please everybody, for they smiled a good deal, and greatly satisfied himself.

But, at times, his commercial mind revolted at being so often called upon to pay outrageously without a sign, as it was bad form to haggle, or question, or even to be supposed to have much notion of vulgar arithmetic. Nevertheless, he had had a few words with his rattling Mentor over accounts which had come to him whilst the goods had gone to the other.

And once or twice, in those enlightening phases known as in one's cups, he had soliloquised so instructively in Mr Lant's hearing, that the latter was, in turn and more soberly, impelled to self-discourse.

"To think," he mused, "that I have burdened myself with this unlicked cub all this time to no effect! What are a few commissions and pickings here and there—a bogus bet or two, a bit at cards, even a bolstering up of my own shaky credit—to what I was going for? There's that bill and judgment—above all, that security letter that I wanted so badly. Badly! By Heaven, it's a matter of life and death! And I've overhauled every scrap of paper in his rooms, and pockets, when he's been snoring like a pen of pigs with the loaded liqueurs that I weighed into him. I suppose the low-minded thief has lodged them with his bankers or attornies. There's a pretty gentleman for you! Gentleman, bedad!

"And even that was only part—a small though urgent

part—of my little game. I meant to bleed him—dry, if I could: for ten thousand, at the very least. And here's the sordid beast, meanly calculating and casting up; and, though he's everlastingly losing his head in important things, he manages to keep it—confound him!—in miserable matters of business and money. I'll have him yet—to his last pound, the dirty hodman that he is at heart—by hook or by crook; but I must act now in the other matter, for it's no trifle. It's a desperate case—and I'm a desperate man!"

A few days later Mr Lant, Captain Fferroll—who was then in Dublin—and Mr Cairney lunched together in a quiet spot, and returned to Lant's rooms: that is, Cairney was to join them there after just looking in at his own.

"You must keep him under your eye for the next three hours, at all costs," Mr Lant had impressed on the Captain, secretly.

"But, but—how the deuce can I drag the animal about with me? Suppose I meet somebody I know?"

"Yes, that would be awkward. Why not keep him here?"

"Oh, I'm not like you. I can't talk—and even to try to talk to—him——"

"I know. Let me see, now. I have it. Yes; that will do excellently well. Set him to work to write the application and particulars for a Militia Commission, or for Membership of the Club, or any dashed thing you like, or all of them together; and keep finding fault, or improvements, and let him have to do it again and again; and, perhaps, get into arguments about them, or let him blow and gas to his vulgar heart's content; anything, to kill the next few hours. You must do it, my dear fellow. I have told you how much hangs upon it, for you and me."

The Captain frowned and moaned, said unedifying things, and resigned himself to the painful task.

When Cairney arrived Lant excused himself as he had an important appointment. His regrets at tearing himself away were mitigated by the fact that the Captain had kindly promised to give Cairney the benefit of his knowledge and abilities in matters of the higher social order, to make his footing assured in the circles which their common ancestral blood entitled him to enter.

"Here's paper and ink, and all that," and he threw on the table a great untidy leather thing, crammed full of letters, invoices, invitation cards, playbills, programmes, as well as the virgin page of clean writing paper and envelopes.

"Oh—please wait while I finish this article in the *Times*," said the Captain when Lant had gone. It helped to kill some time.

"Oh certainly, Captain, fire away," laughed Cairney. "And I'll smoke some of Lant's cigarettes—that I've had to pay for, no doubt," he added in a lower tone.

The Captain looked at him over his eyeglasses with haughty aversion.

He was indolently pulling papers out of the flat leather sack, and reading them without any affectation of concealment, or even of innocence.

The Captain prolonged his reading, but Cairney did not seem to find the time dragging on his hands. On the contrary, he appeared to be highly amused and, at times, even deeply interested with his perusals. He evidently enjoyed the excitement of dipping his hand in the mystery bag, not knowing what the next haul might produce; and the relish of what he had already read imparted zest to the pursuit.

"Why, why—the beast, the cad, is actually reading Lant's correspondence!" growled the Captain.

"Old boy's lunch gone wrong," thought Cairney.

"Hem! Haw! Ha! Mr—a—Cairney—" the Captain's face was blue with fury, and his moustache bristled.

"Hullo, Captain," answered Cairney, unimpressed. "Woke up?"

"Excuse me, Mr—a—Cairney, but allow me to observe that it is not usual a—amongst gentlemen, you know—that is, in fact—Why, dash it all! you're reading Mr Lant's—a—in fact, his correspondence, sir."

"Oh, I'm nearly through now. Just this little pile——"

"But, but, it's private, you know, and, in fact——"

"Most of it isn't, by any means. Some is, and it's rich and rare, as the song says. Wouldn't have missed it for a lot," laughed Cairney.

"But you mustn't, you know. It's the unwritten law. It's an abuse and a—in fact——"

"All right, old chap——"

"Sir!"

"Oh, keep your hair—I mean, just stop chattering a minute." He read, and laughed loudly, whilst the Captain's veins swelled threateningly on his temples.

"Besides," resumed Cairney, wiping his welling eyes and suppressing his further chucklings, "I've been waiting for you. Now I'm quite ready."

The Captain sighed, swore inwardly, and they began—he dictating, the young man writing.

It was a letter to the Lord Lieutenant of the County.

The Captain was very deliberate indeed in collecting his thoughts and framing his sentences. Every word, apparently, had to be expressly chosen, after weighing it against other words.

And when, at last, a draft had been settled, and fair copied, he would bend his frowning brows over it, and find that it would not do at all: and it had to be re-written, as amended, only to be once more condemned and altered.

After several exercises of this kind—from "My Lord, I have the honour" to "Dear Lord Beauvarlet, I beg," and from "Your most obedient humble servant," "Your obedient servant" to "Yours truly"—the Captain came to the conclusion that it would be best to write in the third person: and they started on that tack.

It was during a somewhat lengthened consideration by the Captain of one of these drafts, that Cairney, fingering one of the letters out of the big-mouthed portfolio, idly asked the Captain:

"Have you any relation at Hautcollis named Amelia, besides your sister?"

The question was so sudden that the Captain answered, being taken by surprise:

"No, sir, I have not. But—but—what the devil is it to you, sir? How dare you—you, sir—name my sister? Dash your impudence, sir! I—I—in fact——"

"Oh, go slow, old horse. If you had behaved yourself I would have told you something, but now, you may go and be hanged. Ha, ha!"

"You wretched little cad! I—I—in fact——"

"Oh, drivel away, you old fool. And all this time your sister, whose name I must not take into my low-born mouth, is trotting off with your precious chum the Honourable Fermough Lant. Ho! ho!"

"What! You lie, you dog, you cad, you gutter-snipe, you corner-boy—in fact——"

"Oh, I lie, do I—you senile old goat. Well, listen to this—written from Hautcollis, and signed Amelia Fferroll;

and to this; and to this uncompleted letter of his to her, and to these telegrams."

He read them. It was quite clear. Lant and Miss Fferroll had arranged to meet at Knockalton Junction, come to Dublin together, and take the evening boat to Holyhead, and then go on to London and Paris.

The Captain began to foam.

"The scoundrel, the treacherous scoundrel! And she's double his age! It's her money—and my means of living. And all this while he led me to think that, as you were so hard to fleece satisfactorily, he was eloping with your sister—your co-heiress, he said; and I was to keep you here on some pretext or another——"

"What!" John Cairney jumped up, livid with fury. "What! my sister! My sweet, pure-hearted little Lally! And you two infernal scamps plotted that—you as bad as he, you whited sepulchre! You keep me here with this sham letter-writing, and this villainy in your dirty mind and black heart all the time! Take that, and that, and this——"

An inkstand narrowly missed the Captain's head and crashed into a cabinet, a book smashed his hat, and then John, having worked round the table, dashed his fist, once and again, into his face, until the officer fell, fainting and bloody, to the ground.

John Cairney was thoroughly sobered. He seemed to step clean out, with a single stride, from the false atmosphere in which he had existed during these past weeks, into the healthy air of reality and truth.

Alert, collected, cool, and as if his father's character had suddenly developed within him, he decided on his course.

"Let me see, now. Here's a time-table. We have yet nearly two hours before us. Good."

He collected a number of papers of Lant's, which he

methodically placed in separate covers, and put into his pockets.

Then he revived the Captain with some spirits, and washed his face and tidied him up in Lant's bedroom.

"Look here, Captain," he said, and there was a decision in his manner and a ring in his voice which compelled respect, "you're a vile old scamp, and I have not done with you yet. But there's no time, now. We have to stop this runaway business——"

"Oh, if you can, if you only can," groaned the humbled Captain.

"Yes, I can, and will. But you must help."

"I? Oh, command me, command me. I'll have his blood——"

"Well, never mind his blood just now. We'll save—her, and we'll punish—him. Now, take a little of this, to brace you up, for we must be off. We have time—but none to lose."

He made the Captain drink some brandy, helped him downstairs, and drove with him to his solicitor, Mr Mallor.

The Captain was in a condition of dazed misery. His mind had, so to speak, to be fished up when wanted, after which it sank again.

But Cairney was clear, energetic and resolute.

There was much writing, and driving about, and swearing of affidavits, and seeing a Judge in Chambers, and filing here, and registering there, and exhibiting everywhere, and fees and stamps and office copies; but, at length, everything was completed, and they made their way to the railway station, with a good quarter of an hour in hand.

They were not the only persons in waiting.

Mr Mallor's clerk came along with some papers, and

was ordered to remain, in case he be wanted. A quiet-looking man touched his hat to Mr Mallor, who replied with a nod.

"Sheriff's officer," he whispered to Cairney. "Those two are his men. He has the warrant."

The Captain sat in a stupor—a figure of intense and helpless wretchedness, shame, and fury.

Mr Mallor had a quiet talk with the stationmaster, and telegrams were also despatched down the line for the locking of the doors of the carriage in which Mr Lant and the old lady were travelling—even in the improbable event of their not being the sole occupants of the compartment.

Tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse. There comes an end to everything—even to waiting for a cross-country Irish train.

It came in at last. Under one polite excuse or another, or promise of immediate attention, or improvised explanation, the door of Mr Lant's compartment was not unlocked until the arriving passengers had cleared off the platform. Then, with smiles and murmured apologies, the door was opened, and Mr Lant descended and helped down Miss Fferroll and her minor belongings. He was turning to give some directions to a porter, when the mild-looking man touched his arm and said something to him in a low voice—two burly men closing in noiselessly but determinedly.

"What!" shouted Mr Lant.

"Fugæ warrant—Mr John Cairney. All in perfect order. Best come quietly," was the reply.

"John Cairney! That blighted fool? Dash and blister the wretched little cad!"

Here he caught sight of Cairney, who, with the solicitor, had now advanced—the Captain behind Mr Mallor's burly figure.

"Ah, my dear Cairney, glad you've come. Here's a mess by somebody; some forgotten old proceeding dug up. Do put it right, Jack, old chap; you can, you know, by a single word. Your money's all right;—more than ever now," and he glanced at the lady.

"Come, Amelia," said the Captain, trembling all over, but resolved at white heat. "Come with me. This—a—gentleman has—a—in fact, another engagement."

Mr Mallor whispered a few words to her, placed her hand in his arm, and walked her into the stationmaster's room, the Captain following with her dressing-case and other things; his clerk, as instructed, securing her luggage and depositing it in the proper office.

"Mr Lant," answered Cairney, "these proceedings are not the result of old and neglected ones, but new ones started by me this afternoon. I have long suspected you, but only to-day found you out."

"You infernal little cad——"

"Ah, very likely. I believe that I have shown myself a great lump of a cad—not knowing better—then. But better an unthinking, ignorant, inexperienced cad than a deliberate knave—a liar, schemer, parasite. Take him away."

The Honble Fermough Lant was taken away, gnashing his teeth and crying with vexation, rage and the disgrace of it.

Miss Fferroll did not, apparently, realise what had happened, nor understand what was said to her. Her serenity seemed unruffled, as if all that had happened were ordinary incidents in a railway journey, or customary preliminaries to a private wedding.

They could not continue to occupy the stationmaster's room, so cabs were procured and they drove to Mr Mallor's office—that gentleman despatching a clerk to request the attendance of Miss Fferroll's solicitor.

It was only then that the infatuated old lady seemed to come to herself, and she flamed out—first, at Fermy's slanderers and accusers, and then at that deceiver, and finally, at herself. It was as if she had awoke from a dream. The fear of publicity took hold of her.

Cairney, dark and angry, would not discuss the question of his claim. It was not a matter of money.

Besides, he had Miss Fferroll's guarantee in any event.

She denied all knowledge of such a document, and her solicitor threw doubt upon it, as his client never signed anything—"except love-letters" whispered Mr Mallor—without his knowledge and advice.

The paper was produced by Mr Mallor. It was written on the Hautcollis house-paper. Miss Fferroll and her solicitor denounced it a forgery—which it plainly was, on comparison with her signature on the letters which Cairney had collected from Lant's portfolio, and which constituted such good evidence in connection with the application for the Fugæ warrant.

The Captain concurred. He had never heard of any such guarantee—Lant having led him to believe that the indulgence shown by the late Mr Cairney was merely a matter of persuasion and payment.

As the Captain was a co-debtor, Miss Fferroll, with the consent of her solicitor, gave Mr Mallor a cheque for the entire amount, including the costs of the warrant and arrest—Mr Cairney making it a condition of the settlement that he retain the forged document, so as to ensure Lant's absence from Ireland and Miss Fferroll's immunity from any correspondence or communication by him.

"And—and, what am I to do with these?" asked she, taking some jewel cases from her reticule, and putting

them on the table. "He gave them to me—only to-day."

She positively laughed now.

Cairney opened the cases; then he took some papers from his pocket, sorted out one, and said:

"Polling & Shee. I thought so. Here's their bill for these identical things. Only, it's made out in my name. It's a way he had. I found several of the same sort to-day. Of course, I knew nothing of it, and intended telling Polling & Shee."

"Ah, well, the things must be returned, and there's an end of that. I shall see to that," said Mr Mallor.

At last this sitting broke up: Miss Fferroll went off with her solicitor and her brother; and Mr Mallor accompanied Cairney to his rooms.

Chapter III

Before leaving his office Mr Mallor—who was a hunting, riding and driving man, and lived in a big house, although his business premises were devoid of carpet and furnished meanly with shabby and decrepid deal—altered his appearance a little. He put on leggings, and a felt hat, and carried a heavy driving coat and whip.

He had heard Cairney's description of his plundering and over-bearing valet, and his eye kindled in view of the forthcoming interview with that pampered and haughty personage.

They had to wait some little time before the door of his chambers was opened. He rang yet again.

"Oh, all right, all right, confound you!" said a peevish voice from within. Then somebody seemed to

come along composedly, who yawned with much deliberation, and finally opened the door.

"Oh, it's you," said the man, all but puffing the smoke of a thick cigar into his employer's face. Then he winked at Mr Mallor, to that gentleman's delight.

"Take your hand out of your pocket, you rascal: and how dare you smoke in my presence?" Mr Cairney plucked the cigar from the man's mouth and threw it into the grate, and pushed him into the sitting-room—amazed and impotent.

"Now, then, if you don't take that insolent look out of your face I'll make broken china of it." He shook him vigorously.

"Yes, sir," said the valet.

"Anybody called for me?"

"Mr Lant, sir——"

"When?"

"Shortly after you left, sir; this afternoon, sir."

"What did he want?"

"Don't know, sir. Looked for some papers again——"

"Again?"

"I—I mean——"

"Come, out with it — and with everything. This gentleman is my solicitor, Mr Mallor; and we have a policeman below, to take note of your boxes when we search them: perhaps, to take you."

The man fell into abject dread and on to his knees.

Then Mr Mallor—a muscular giant—stood over him, lifted him and threw him, literally, into an arm-chair, and told him that he could please himself whether he told the whole truth now, or deferred it for the police or assize court.

Between protestations and entreaties, tears, vows

and penitences, he made confession of much tangled scoundrelism.

Apart from common place peculations, and mean swindlings and spoilings—in which he was merely the agent and Mr Lant the real principal — they learnt several surprising things.

They looked at each other when the man described the minute scrutiny to which every box, drawer or other likely place had been subjected, in the search for certain papers relating to the debt to Cairney. And to the abstraction of some blank cheques and the assiduous practice of his signature—by the narrator—who had not yet attained proficiency. Also to the elaborate scheme to get a large amount of money from Mr Cairney to hush up a claim for a pretended breach of promise to marry——

"What's that?" cried both Mr Mallor and his client together.

"She was here this afternoon, and had a row with Mr Lant. She's gone back on him, and wouldn't go on with the manœuvre. By the hokey!" as the door-bell rang loudly, "but that's her again, I believe."

"Stay you here," said Cairney. "I'll go. Mr Mallor, don't let him move, please,"

"Let him!" chuckled Mr Mallor. "No—not even if he vapourises himself on the spot."

A tall, dark-eyed, handsome girl came into the room.

She started when she saw the solicitor, and still more when her eyes fell on the valet, at sight of whom she laughed a scornful little laugh.

"Perhaps, it's just as well," she said, and then she proceeded excitedly:

"Oh, can you not see, sir, what's going on all around

you—the plots and schemes to humbug and deceive and rob you? How they fawn and flatter—and, when your back's turned, laugh and jeer at you? And have you no friends to look after you and shelter you from the wolves and foxes and sharks?"

She quieted down a little, and went on:

"I must speak—for they tried to get me to join them in a conspiracy to make money out of you. When they first spoke to me I thought it a joke and laughed: but oh! I see the black villainy of it now, and I must tell you. He said I should have five hundred pounds out of it—but I would scorn the dirty money, and hate myself if I touched it."

Mr Mallor complimented her on her honourable heart and courage — after taking a note of her statements. Then, observing the valet's misery and the girl's disdain, he asked:

"You know—him?"

"I—I did—once, sir," replied she, with a charming toss of the head.

"We were to get married next October," said the man feebly. "But—but things happened. If it hadn't been that I gave the master the loan of my savings—nigh on two hundred pounds——"

"The master! What do you mean? asked the lawyer.

"I mean, the Honourable Mr Lant——"

"But you said 'the Master.'"

"Yes, sir, he's my master. I've only been lent to Mr Cairney, but he didn't know that, of course."

"Ah! I see. Go on."

"I was his servant when he was in the Army, and when he left it he bought me out, and I've been with him ever since."

"But your affection for him and fidelity to him don't justify your being dishonest."

"No, sir, but he told me that it was only some of his own money that he was trying to get back—that Mr Cairney and his father had got all they had out of him, by all sorts of lawyer tricks, and that it was quite right to try and get some back—for it was all his own, after all—by any contrivance or manner of means possible."

"H'm! That was the line of argument, was it?" said Mr Mallor. "Now, take this from me—not that it matters a rush, but it may stir up your conscience, which evidently likes to be soothed easily. Mr Lant had only one transaction with the Cairneys, and that has been paid by his fellow debtor, so that he never parted with a single penny piece, in money or in money's worth, to Mr Cairney. Now that that ghost's laid, drive on."

"But I didn't know that, sir. I believed Mr Lant, and —I wanted to get my own money back——"

"Which now you never will, my man—from Lant. He's in prison at this moment, and you——"

"Oh don't, sir, don't for God's sake——"

"What's this?" said the young lady in a deepened voice, starting to her feet.

Disregarding her, Mr Mallor asked:

"But why, in addition to deception and robbery, why did you treat Mr Cairney, whose bread you were eating, with such insolence?"

"Well, sir, you see, he's not—he's not one of us, you know."

"Oh, that's it, is it? And I suppose that I am the same—eh?"

"Well, of course, you may be all right enough in your way, as an attorney, but—but——"

"But I'm not one of—you——"

"I mean, Mr Lant's set—officers and such like."

"That's quite clear, quite clear, and perfectly satisfactory. Now—please don't go, Miss, not just yet—are you prepared to make a clean breast of your own dealings while in Mr Cairney's service, or shall we overhaul your things and accounts?"

"What shall I do—what shall I do?" asked he, piteously addressing her, and wringing his hands.

"It's nothing to me what you do. All is over between us," she replied; and then she sobbed.

"He can't marry you now in October I fear," unfeelingly remarked Mr Mallor.

She sprang to her feet, and her eyes flashed.

"If you think it's because he's lost his money, by lending it to that young fiend Lant, you're mistaken, sir. If he's short in his accounts, you can have my savings—nearly £90. But I will have nothing more to do with him. Though it's a mighty big fool he is, and easily led, rather than a blagyard or a villain."

Then she covered her face, as if she could so hide her heart-broken tears.

Suddenly she threw up her head.

"Ted," she cried imperiously, "show everything, tell everything, keep nothing back: Have it out, for better or worse, if there's anything you've done, or taken, or kept back. Never look me in the face again if you hide a thing."

"You're a brave girl," said Mr Mallor admiringly. "Now, you just step into Mr Cairney's room and lie down a bit. We'll call you when we want you. You had better do as I tell you," he added in a whisper, as he opened the door for her: and she obeyed.

A half hour passed, and then she was recalled to the sitting-room.

Mr Mallor and Mr Cairney were very grave, and the valet very mean, contrite, and unhappy.

"Things are even worse than we suspected," said the solicitor. "He's made restitution of some small portion: the rest, if his word is to be taken, is beyond his power, for he has handed to Mr Lant money and even cheques which he received for the payment of accounts; he has suppressed invoices and bills, because he sent the things to Lant, Mr Cairney not knowing anything about them: and other dodges too numerous to set out."

"Oh," moaned the poor girl, rocking herself in sheer misery.

Cairney had said very little. Now he stood up.

"Listen to me, both of you." They looked up with a start.

"You stand here to-day shamed and stripped—without a penny in the world; and even if this young lady's noble offer of her hard-earned savings were added to what you have paid over, it would still leave you a lot to the bad.

"And what character have you? What character have you not?

"Yet—I can't help thinking—a man can't be utterly bad if he has the love of a true woman.

"And she is one—and a million times too good for you.

"And a man can't be utterly beyond hope, if he has a feeling of faithfulness for an old master—though it may take a twist to the bad.

"Now, your feeling for Lant was quite misplaced.

"He was vile enough to take and spend your poor savings, that you were going to get married on.

"He was training you to forgery—he to have all the benefit, and you all the terrible risk.

"He put you up to the larcenies and embezzlements of moneys, accounts, and goods, and what not.

"And he deceived you grossly by playing on your feelings and sense of right and wrong, by telling you that he had lost his money to us—when the very colour of it had never been seen by us.

"And then the infamy of wanting to involve this pretty and high-principled young lady in a conspiracy to extort money from me—and all that that implies!"

"Oh don't, sir. Have pity, have pity!" and she threw herself, crying, at his feet.

He raised her gently, kissed her brow, and led her to a seat.

"Shall I forgive him?" he asked her, with a smile.

She raised large luminous eyes to his.

"Will you forgive him—if I do?" asked he again.

"Oh, sir, oh, sir——"

"Well then, take him away, and rule him with a rod of iron. And—here's a little prescription——"

He wrote something on a slip of paper.

"Here's a cheque for £200—to you, not to him. Mark, it is yours, only. Look after him:—and send me a bit of the wedding cake in October, or earlier."

* * * * *

Mr Cairney packed a small portmanteau, locked up his chambers and gave the key to Mallor, sold him his riding horse—which they examined on the way to the station—and took the train to Ballynoggin.

For a week he had been carrying in his pocket, unopened, a letter of Lally's. He had not had the pluck to open it for he feared or felt that she would say something about Cecily.

He was quite conscious of the moral cowardice, but, as usual, the task became daily more repugnant.

He now made a sort of desperate plunge at its contents.

Lally informed him that she and Tom had arranged to get married in the course of the ensuing month.

"And neither of them knows that she has a penny," reflected he. Then came a quick pang because there was no mention of Cecily, although it was he, himself, who had laid that restraint on Lally.

"Tom is a noble fellow," said Cairney to himself—"a fine, genuine, disinterested fellow; and I'm a miserable, pinch-beck, veneered, twopenny cad. It's quite right what they all called me. And Lally, bless her! is a buxom, true-hearted little angel. But oh, Cecily, my darling, my darling—always coming back to my thoughts and dreams, though I—like a fool, an impious fool—was always trying to chase you away—what shall I say to you—what can I say to you? Oh, how slow this train is! Will it never get there?"

It was past nine when he arrived at Ballynoggin, and he reached Ivy Cottage without observation or incident.

His own house, No. 1, was dark. He let himself in, changed into some of his former clothes, and then made his way quietly, by the garden, to the back of No. 2.

He peeped into the kitchen. Mrs Dermott was alone, occupied in laying the simple supper of bread and cheese and some salad.

He opened the door gently, placed his finger on his lips, and approached her on tip-toe.

Her alarm soon gave way to smiles. She whispered back to him that Cecily was upstairs. She had declined to accompany Tom and Lally who had gone to a lecture, and she was now sitting in the dark in the parlour—poor girl!

Cairney stole up the stairs: the parlour door was open, and he stood an instant, still, irresolute, with beating heart.

"Who is it? John?" cried a girl's voice from the dark room. Below, the old mother clasped her hands, as tears of thankfulness flowed down her wrinkled face.

"Now, mother," cried John, as he and Cecily burst into the kitchen, "Cis and I are going foraging for supper. We shan't be long."

They went out laughing like a couple of school children, and they soon returned with a loin of pork cut into chops, a yard of sausages, and a couple of lads bearing baskets of bottles of wine, stout, ale, spirits, pickles, preserved fruits, white sugar, lemons, and other things, whilst a baker's boy brought a supply of loaves and formidable confectionary.

"Now, all hands help," cried John, taking off his coat and rolling up his shirt-sleeves. "I'll be cook. Cis, you see to the table. Mother—now, just you sit in your chair quite quiet, with this glass in your hand; and we'll consult you when we get into difficulties. What do fry pork chops in, mother?"

There was much movement not unmixed with confusion, many mistakes which amused them greatly, delicious but declamatory odours, and a good deal of noise and clatter.

In the midst of it all, and just as Cecily was shrieking with laughter at some bungle or other of John's, Tom and Lally arrived.

They took in the situation at a glance. John kissed Lally, and gripped Tom's hand hard.

"Some day I'll explain, Tom," said he.

There never was a merrier, or truly happier supper party. After the pork chops and Dublin stout, the ladies had preserves and fancy biscuits and port wine: and the gentlemen brewed themselves some punch and smoked cigars, and made speeches which called forth

much cheering, some delightful crying, and the kissing of all the ladies several times over.

When they quieted down—they did so when John held up his hand and told them that he had something serious to say—he gravely addressed the company:

"Lally and Tom. Of course, I knew it was bound to be, and I'm mighty and especially glad that it has come now. Why? Well, I'll tell you. There's some money and property coming to Lally, but I was forbidden to say anything of it for three months. And it's all the finer that it was in ignorance of it, that you two have arranged to marry. But that's not all, Tom, my boy."

He relit his cigar and went on:

"Not all, Tom. You and I are going to be brothers indeed, for Cis and I will get married at the same time."

Here all the ladies rose and successively kissed all the gentlemen.

"Well now, it's going to be this way, Tom, my boy. There will be £5000 settled on each of our wives the day before we marry. Then there will be £5000 for you, and £5000 for me, and we'll go into partnership with it as Auctioneers and Land Agents—perhaps, we'll buy out old Grogan, or pension him off. That was an idea of my poor dear father. No—don't interrupt, as he used to say. That's quite apart from what Lally gets on her own account, and Cis shall have as much, each to do what she likes with. Invest it, and make the interest a dress fund, I should think; but I don't care."

There was much surprise and gratitude and rejoicing.

"Now, that will leave me with a certain loose balance —we'll round it at a clear ten thousand—though it's well over that—and this is what I think about doing with that. This is a sort of family council, you know, and nobody must blab.

"Well then, this £10,000 is going to be given to build the Cairney Wing to the Hospital, or the Cairney Ward. And nobody's ever to know but what my dear misunderstood father left the money for that very purpose. Mind, we all stick to that. Here's hands on it. Tom and I are going to work—with our heads, and hands, and our capital: we are not going to fool about setting up as squires or imitators, or as snobs, or as cads; but solid, respectable family men, ha! ha! And if we do well, I'll set up a little boat to sail about the bay and creeks, and Tom, I know, will go in for gardening."

* * * * *

The firm of Grogan, Cairney & Dermott, is as respected as it is successful.

Tom lives in Ivy House—the two cottages having been thrown into one, and almost rebuilt, a neighbouring potato store and yards bought up and added to the grounds, which, with the former wharf, have been converted into a pretty garden, with summer-house and conservatories, trees overhanging the river, terraces, boat-house, etc.; all very picturesque and pleasant.

Many of the inhabitants of Ballynoggin, who never had a good word for the late Mr Cairney, spoke of him with deep respect; and they shook their heads when they hinted that the son was never likely to so do generous a thing as give £10,000 to the Hospital—not he.

"Faith! And if it had been left to him it's not the shadow of the sound of as many pence that the stones of the Hospital would ever have heard," they said.

The expression is clouded, but the meaning is clear.

John heard it and laughed.

Some years passed.

The Cairney and Dermott households were increasing

almost to the point when families begin to become clans. The truth about the Hospital gift came out, and John was highly praised—more for his modesty than even for his munificence—and he was put in the Commission of the Peace.

The Captain was dead. Miss Fferroll transferred his allowance, through her solicitor, to the Honble Fermough Lant, on the sole condition that he never returned to Ireland.

Mr Mallor has taken the ex-valet into his service. He makes a good process-server, clerk, and in an irregular sort of way—practicable in Ireland only, where incongruities appear logical and logic runs to nonsense or violence, at times—personal servant, deputy butler, and other things. His wife has a small and prosperous millinery business.

"Ah!" says John, as he regards his five sturdy boys, "my poor dear father was wise and right. Make your sons gentlemen, said he; back them with your money, and send them to college. Yes, that's it: and it's something to work for. They shall be gentlemen, please God! educated, high-minded, well-mannered men. I cannot forget that I was once in danger of remaining—ah! the mere recollection of it makes my face burn, even now—a wretched Little Cad."

The Great Sweepstake

THE Second Battalion of the Third Riding Prince Frederick's Own Loyal Royal Yorkshire Bayoneteers—known in that County and in the Service as the "Tha-Knaws"—was stationed at Ballynoggin.

It was a distinguished Regiment, and proud in the fact that it was composed of genuine "tykes"—with the exception of those who were Irish. It was a singular circumstance that the majority of the officers of the Second Battalion were also Irish.

"Yes, dash it!" growled Major Murphison — Old Murphy, as he was called by the soldiers amongst themselves—"We're a workhouse combined with an infant-school, bedad!" He alluded to the comparative poverty of the older officers and to the youthfulness of the subalterns. With the exception of the Chaplain they were, to a man, either widowers or bachelors, and sincerely addicted to sport. This last weakness ran right through the Battalion, every male in which—down to the slimmest bugler or plumpest drummer—knew all about every race-horse, jockey, and meeting in the three kingdoms. Football, cricket, pugilism, and other arts and pastimes were minor idols; horsiness was the supreme cult.

It was, therefore, an especially exciting event that young Montfarren O'Greaves, the new Assistant-Surgeon, should have drawn the Favourite in the Great Goodwood Sweep —10,000 guineas for an outlay of only 21s.! Barring the unforeseen, it was undoubtedly considered that that substantial sum was as good as if it were already in his sieve-

like pocket. O'Greaves himself did not know very much of such matters; in fact, he thought it a joke rather than a conspicuous piece of good fortune. He was a laughing, blundering, sentimental fellow—too careless even to hope steadily.

"Bad luck to the bad luck of it!" said Major Murphison, who had, of course, drawn a blank. "Here's a smooth-faced bhoy—a mere sucking neophyte—and he gets the Favourite right away! His very first go in racing, too, and had to be persuaded to put down his guinea! And here am I, grown grey and desperate at it; and I want the money, too, bedad! Oh, dhivil fly away with the want of sinse and dacency of it all!"

Mr O'Greaves, as usual in such cases, received numerous offers by post and telegraph for his chance, but he refused them all—even the Regimental pool or syndicate which was suggested for the purpose of buying it.

He would give no reason—only laughed and blushed; and the Major cursed him by six or seven Irish saints and over two dozen Hindoo gods, besides a number of miscellaneous infernalities.

"Me bhoy," said he to him, confidentially, in his own room, "it's meself is glad to see that it's an ould hid ye've got on your shoulders. You did well, sorr—very well, not to share your luck with a parcel of fellows that scarcely look the way you're going at any other time. And I'll go bail that dhivil a one of them ever asked you if you'd had a mouth on you before this. See to that, now. They look down on the medical profession—dash their consait! But I've always stood up for them, and always shall, begorra!"

O'Greaves said he was very greatly obliged.

"Not a bit, my son—and it's a fatherly interest I've taken in you, my lad, from the day you joined us—as

indade, I ought to do, being, in a kind of way, *in loco parentis*, regimentally spaking. Besides, as I was saying, being a blood relation——"

"Oh, I didn't know that, Major!" interposed O'Greaves.

"What! Not know that the Murphisons and the O'Greaves are related as thick as eels in a mill-pond! Do you mane that sariously, now? Ha! I haven't wurrds to express my surprise. Oh, the shallowness of modern education, and the crim'nel neglect of what's thruly worth learning, of this hollow and flashy generation! Yes, me bhoy; and the Montfarrens as well. I'll tell you all about it another time. Now, listen while I spake to you. I'll stand by you, and in with you, in this matter. It's a duty I owe you under the circumstances, for you are young and inexperienced. Do you think that I'm the man to sit still and see you fling your luck away on schaming and unsympathising strangers, who'd only laugh at your greenness behind your back when your face was turned? No, no. It's my duty, I tell you; and I'm not going to desert it, or desert you —is it likely, now?"

The Major glared around fiercely, as if awaiting a challenge; then he replenished the glasses, and lowered his voice.

"This is what we'll do. We'll hedge—hedge. Do you see? Make sure of the big half of it, whatever happens. That's it. Here now, I'll just write a telegram —for the joint account. You needn't throuble at all, me bhoy—it's all arranged. Not a whisper to a sowl, now. I'll see you through this business, never fear. You have my wurrd—Major Murphison's wurrd — and never a Murphison, or an O'Greaves, was a thraitor to that. So that's all settled now."

O'Greaves would, beyond a doubt, have been helplessly enmeshed, and rushed off his balance, had it remained in his power to deal with the matter in hand. As it was, he could only stammer out that nothing would have given him greater pleasure, and he was truly grateful—but it was too late.

The Major felt furious, and would have broken loose, but for the shy and half-ashamed look on the young fellow's face. He at once suspected that somebody else had already taken the trick. That nefarious conspirator who had anticipated him must be discovered and upset.

A little bantering pressure, and a few glasses more, produced O'Greaves' confession that he had given the chance to Miss Geraldine Byrne in payment of some trifling flirtation wager.

The Major's face grew more deeply purple, as he gnawed at the ends of his wiry red moustache, whilst his eyes took on an introspective studiousness. He knew the Byrnes—Mrs Byrne, widow of a Madras Colonel, and her daughters—very well.

When, however, he heard further that Miss Geraldine —being inexperienced, generous, and, like all girls, short and chary of pocket-money—had given the chance to her mother, in lieu of her contribution to some local charity for poor women in which she was interested, his brow cleared as if by magic. He promptly resumed his habitual tone and manner, and—very abruptly, as O'Greaves thought—dismissed that young gentleman to his duties.

Within an hour the Major had proposed to Mrs Byrne and been accepted by her, and had laid against the Favourite to the extent of £5000, double-locking both secrets in his impenetrable bosom.

"Make sure of £5000, anyway," he soliloquised, "besides a cosy home, a tidy income of her own, and a

deuced fine woman of forty-four, who doesn't look a day oulder than a good many years under that; thanks to that young fool, who may go to the dhivil now, for all I care. Blood relations, indade! Ha, ha!"

The young fool meantime reflected in this wise:

"Hedge. That's what he said—hedge. Now, if that means anything at all, it must mean this:—back some other horse against the Favourite. That's it, of course. But which? I don't like asking the fellows—I should, perhaps, be dragged into talking of Geraldine to them. I'm sorry I did to the Major; but he's a blood relation—so he says. I don't understand these things; he was right enough there. I'm not very bright, at best; in fact, if I have a thought in my head, it's unbeknown to myself. Let me see, now."

He referred to a newspaper and read the latest betting.

"Here's my plan," he resumed to himself. "Here's Flybiter, the Favourite, at the top of the list, at 5 to 1; and here's Nephew to Kreutzer, at the other end of it, at 200 to 1. That is, I take it, that the one will win and the other won't. Ah! it's not so difficult as I imagined; indeed, it's as easy as drinking. What an artful old card the Major is to pretend that I wanted guiding and instructing! I know all about hedging now—just as if this were my fiftieth operation on the Turf, instead of my first. I've simply got to back the horse at the very bottom of the list."

So he went to the telegraph-office and backed the Nephew for £50.

"There," he said, when he wrote confirming his telegram, "that's not only the mathematics of betting, but it's the logic as well. If Geraldine's horse—I mean her mother's—wins, she gets ten thousand guineas; if not,

mine wins, and I get just as many pounds. How very simple it is, after all!"

The Major had, naturally, said nothing to Mrs Byrne about Goodwood; so he remained unaware that she had put a guinea of her own into the charity and given the chance to her eldest daughter, Miranda.

Later in the day Captain M'Terrup dropped in. He had a sedate but well-restrained liking for Miss Byrne. His allusion to O'Greaves' singular good fortune in drawing the Favourite naturally led to Mrs Byrne's lightly remarking, with a smile proportioned to the insignificance of the subject, that the chance had been transmitted to Miranda.

The Captain immediately grew very grave, an expression of countenance which was succeeded by one betokening a severe internal struggle, and that, in turn, gave way to an air of desperate resoluteness. He found, or made, an opportunity to whisper something to Miss Byrne, and the pair sauntered together into the garden.

She re-entered the house soon afterwards, radiant with happiness, for he had asked her to be his wife, and she had consented.

He made his rapid way to the telegraph office, and laid against the Favourite, "Half *certain* is better than the whole merely *possible*," muttered he, as he assumed a bearing of utter indifference, and determined to breathe never a word about his engagement or bet to mortal creature.

Miss Byrne was as shrewd as she was beautiful, and as quick-tempered as she was both. She remembered the Captain's serious and almost solemn look when the Favourite was irreverently mentioned, and she reflected with a pang that she had probably been indiscreet in giving the chance to Fanny, her one-third of a maid, in settlement of some accumulated items and matters.

When, therefore, Sergeant Ostlethorpe—a handsome, dashing young fellow of respectable family, who had been a lawyer's clerk before he got into trouble—found Fanny in tears that evening, he soon elicited that it was all because of Miss Byrne's dreadful goings-on about that chance which she had given her, and now most unreasonably, and even violently, wanted her to restore.

"You didn't give it back, did you, Fan?" anxiously asked the Sergeant, as his gold-lace chevrons stole round her yielding waist.

"No, John," she said, "that I didn't; for even if I——"

He arrested her further reply by the abrupt administration of a volley of unwontedly fervent kisses; and she, not without some alacrity, promised to be Mrs Ostlethorpe so soon as her quarter was up, or sooner.

He hurried away under the pretence of duty, but, in reality, to be in time to telegraph to a bookmaker whom he knew to lay against the Favourite to the utmost extent of his means or credit.

"A cool thou is better than nothing, and will buy a decent public-house," he cogitated, "if Flybiter loses. If he wins, I shan't grudge the stakes. But I'll say nought to anybody."

When Fanny came to review the striking event which had so precipitately happened, she could not help thinking of the preposterous intrusion into the proceedings of so trumpery and incongruous a thing as a mere race-horse. She laughed to herself, as who would not?

"And to think," said she, after she had disposed of her young ladies, "that after all, I gave that chance away to Bessie for that unmade silk dress she's had so long! And a good bargain, too."

Next morning an officer's servant observed to some of

his fellows that there must be something wrong with the Favourite, for he had had a chat with the telegraph clerk, who informed him that several officers, including the Major, had wired to lay heavily against him.

This intelligence ran like wild-fire through the Battalion, and was quickly carried to the officers' quarters, by the usual barrack channels. A shoal of telegrams, begotten of doubt in Flybiter, was the result.

"It's a sure thing, tha knaws, th' favourite's not gaun to win," passed from mouth to mouth; and, so soon as parade was over, there was a wild rush to the local book-makers, and to the Post Office with letters containing money orders.

The Doctor had quite a scene with the Major for not giving him the tip. The Major protested that he knew nothing, and that it was a mere "hedge." The Doctor treated that explanation with derision, and went and laid substantially against the Favourite. Being a good, though highly irascible fellow, and attached in his way to the Chaplain and his large family, he put a little on for him.

"If it comes right, a thousand will be very handy for him, I know. If not—why, let it go with the rest, for it will about finish me."

The subject was the all-engrossing one at mess; and the shout of laughter which rolled into the night when O'Greaves diffidently admitted that he had backed Nephew to Kreutzer to win, startled the thirstiest noses out of their tankards in the canteen.

There was one man—he must have been the only one in the Battalion of whom it could be said—who had not made a bet one way or the other. This was Ted Daly, the Major's servant.

"Botheration!" said he, "and it's just my luck, sorr.

I shtood to win a hape of money on that same animal, bad cess to't! saving your honour's presence."

"What's that?" asked the Major, sharply.

Daly recounted that Bessie, Mrs Byrne's cook, had presented him with the chance, which she had received from Fanny, who got it from one of the young ladies.

He had never witnessed such an access of fury, polyglot swearing, tramplings, smashings, tearings, flingings, and other demonstrations of demoniacal possession as suddenly assailed the Major. It was only when, thoroughly frightened, he started screaming for a saint or two, and some secular help, that his master began to pull himself together a little.

"It's all right, Daly—a bit reminder of a sunstroke I once had in the East. Violent sunshine sometimes brings it back, but it doesn't last, as you see."

"Glory be to God!" said Daly, implicitly. It was raining hard just then, but he never doubted the explanation.

"Don't dare to say a wurrd of this, mind. I'll take a pill, and that will put me all right."

"Yes, sorr," said Daly.

"Ha! h'm! Just so. By the way, what was that you were saying about the Favourite?" asked the Major, with a yawn.

Daly repeated his story, and lamented his ill-luck.

"Does any one know that you have that horse?"

"Dhivil a sowl, sorr, except Bessie, and she has neither rading, knowledge, nor mim'ry, no more than a hin, sorr."

"H'm! Opinion seems to be dead against his winning."

"It is that same, sorr, begorra! Why couldn't they lave him alone?"

"Look here, Daly, didn't you tell me that you belonged to these parts?"

"I did, sorr."

"Ah, so I thought," mused the Major. "Pity, and hard lines on you, too, my man, to have to march away and to turn your back on your own country and your own people, and, what's her name—Bessie. Dashed hard! I should say." He seemed to be talking to himself, as he repeated, "Dashed hard!"

Daly had never had presented to him such a vivid picture of his hitherto-unfelt trials. He was, therefore, deeply affected by the sense of his unhappy lot, which came upon him suddenly and on the authority of so great an officer as the Major; and he put the end of a dirty fore-finger into the corner of his eye, where there was an unexpected tear.

"Ah!" remarked the Major gently, "Sorry I spoke. Never mind, my good fellow. Your time will expire—when does it expire?"

"Three mortial long years from now, sorr," sighed Daly.

"Oh, bother it! that's bad, bad. And you in your own part of the country, and the next station, perhaps, Ceylon or the Cape; and Bessie married to somebody else before you come back. Such is a soldier's life, dhivil take it!"

After a distressful pause he brought his fist down on the table and said:

"Look here now, Daly. You've been a good soldier and a good servant, and maybe I'll be after settling down in time hereabouts, myself. Thank God! I'm an Irishman, too. Yes, and I'm proud of it, Daly, my man. You shall have your discharge."

"Lord in hiv'n bless your honner!" gasped Daly.

"Yes, to-day, this very day; and a ten-pun note, besides."

Daly dropped on his knees and poured out a torrent of pathetically eloquent gratitude.

"There, there, that will do. And you can marry Bessie, eh? And—a—by-the-way, you will give me that thing about the horse—of your own free will, of course. I wouldn't touch it else with the end of a flagstaff—no, not if you prayed yourself black in the face for me to take it otherwise. Mind that, now."

"Yes, sorr, an' willing, wid all the heart of me, God knows, sorr," answered Daly earnestly.

"I'll have your papers made out at once, before my mind changes. You needn't go back to quarters. You can rummage for some civilian coats and things that I've about done with, and take them. And—and, I won't be afther doing things by halves, nor yet by quarters either, bedad! If that miserable and discredited horse does happen to win, though I don't believe a wurrd about him, or the contrary, I'll make Bessie a present of another ten-pun note. The chance only cost a beggarly starved guinea to begin with, and it may be dear at the odd shilling when all's said and done."

"Yes, sorr, indade it might," said Daly.

"Very well. That's settled. Now, remember, not a wurrd to anyone—not even to Bessie—about this till I give you lave. If you as much as make a sign of it in your slape, I'll go back on all I've promised, and make it dashed uncomfortable for you, besides. Mark that, now." A fierce look drove home the last expression.

"Never fear, sorr," smiled Daly; and then a touch of native shrewdness and gentlemanliness imparted a comical yet touching dignity to his voice and bearing as he added:

"I wouldn't be afther doing a thing, sorr, as others might take in a wrong light, or lay up agin your honner, not if—if I was to be hanged for it. Nor, if that horse should happen to win, and if it was twenty times as much gowld on his hid that you'd be getting, would I grudge a grudge, or have a ha'porth of grief or sorra the sorry that I'd asked your honner's acceptance of it. It's glad I'd be, and proud—maybe gladder than you, sorr. An' I shall be a civilian when I hand it over to you—though, it's on the mantle-shelf now I put it, for safety, inside your cigar-case; and thanks to your kindness to a poor counthryman. And, begorra! it's through fire and water I'd go for your honner, let alone a discrate silence, sorr, that costs nothing, except the not spaking, bedad!"

Major Murphison heard this passionate address with mingled feelings.

"Dash it all!" he said to himself, "he's more of a gentleman than I am. But what was I to do?"

On the momentous day the barracks were in a ferment. Never did the Tha-Knaws so scamp their dinner or feel so intense an excitement as the hour approached for the result of the race to be known.

They formed a chain of men from the telegraph-office to the barracks.

The whole town seemed to be given up to the soldiers, who, however, were too intent on the expected intelligence to have eyes or ears for anything else; and their throats seemed to get the drier for drinking.

At length the news came, and produced the wildest elation. *The favourite was beaten!*

Ballynoggin had never before heard such cheering as was that afternoon re-echoed by the hills behind the town.

Montfarren O'Greaves was acclaimed the greatest and

most practical hero in the annals of the Tha-Knaws. He was the primary cause of all the luck. What is the gallantry of a fellow who lets out the blood compared to the canniness of him who lets in the money?

Then the Battalion—which, in the sweet and simple Yorkshire phrase, was "stiff wi' brass"—settled down to one of the most unremitting, unanimous, and unreserved drinkings ever recorded in the history of the British or any other Army.

Soon afterwards the Tha-Knaws were put on the roster for foreign service, and were ordered—"banished," said the Major—to Halifax, N.S.

There was scarcely an unbroken head, heart, or window in Ballynoggin as the Battalion marched away.

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